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THE MOON MISTRESS

DIANE DE POITIERS

JEHANNE D'ORLIAC

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Diane de Poitiers

JEHANNE d'ORLIAC

Translated by F. M. Atkinson

A full-length portrait of a famous French woman who was celebrated for her beauty and who won and held the love of a king nineteen years younger than herself. Born of a noble family, Diane became the mistress of Henri II, shortly after her husband's death. Mlle. d'Orliac has brought considerable evidence to disprove the legend that Diane was first the mistress of François I.

Diane, by right of courage and beauty, was virtually Queen of France, assisting Henri in problems of state and receiving in return chateaus, lands, titles and money. A woman of splendid health, she outlived Henri by several years. It was her custom to rise at three, take a cold bath and ride horseback for three hours before breakfast. Always dressed in black and white, she moved serenely through court life and mad intrigue, "one of the most certain glories of Françe."

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THE MOON MISTRESS

DIANE DE POITIERS

GRANT' SÉNÉCHALLE
DE NORMANDY

DIANE DE POITIERS AT ABOUT HER SIXTEENTH YEAR, AFTER HER MARRIAGE WITH LOUIS DE BRÉZÉ, GRANT SÉNÉCHAL DE NORMANDY

From the Drawing by Madame de Boisy, Bibliothèque Nationale

THE MOON MISTRESS

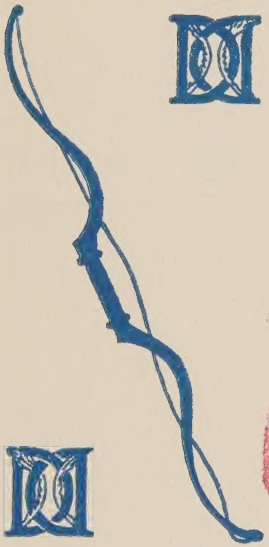
DIANE DE POITIERS

GRANT' SÉNÉCHALLE DE NORMANDY

BY JEHANNE D'ORLIAC

TRANSLATED BY
F. M. ATKINSON

WITH 27 ILLUSTRATIONS



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CONTENTS

I *Prelude* 11

II *Childhood Days in Valentinois* 25

III *The Grant' Sénéchalle of Normandy.* 1515-1531 49

IV *The Comtesse de Saint-Vallier.* 1531-1547 113

V *The Duchesse de Valentinois.* 1547-1559 169

VI *Under the Sign of the Crescent. Anet, Chenonceaux* 229

VII *Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Médicis* 263

VIII *The Lady of Anet and Limours.* 1559-1566 297

ILLUSTRATIONS

Diane de Poitiers at about her Sixteenth Year	*Frontispiece*
The Château of Saint-Vallier	28
Jehan de Poitiers, Father of Diane	32
Anne de Beaujeu, Duchess of Bourbon	40
Anne de Beaujeu, Her Daughter, and Ladies of Honour	42
Louis de Brézé, Husband of Diane	52
Francis I, about 1516	54
Claude of France, Queen of France	58
Charles de Bourbon, Constable of France	80
Madame La Grant' Sénéchalle	118
Tomb of Louis de Brézé at Rouen	124
Diane de Poitiers in black and white	126
Henry II, King of France	134
The Three Fates, with features of Diane and Her Daughters	174
Henry II, Horseback	182
Diane de Poitiers as Widow	206
Plan of Château D'Anet	232
Château D'Anet	232
Balustrade with Monogram of Diane	232
The Fountain of Diane at Anet	234

Château de Chenonceaux 250

Diane of France, Daughter of Henry II and Diane 260

Catherine de Médicis, Rival of Diane 266

The Three Graces bearing the Heart of Henry II 294

Château de Chaumont 300

Tomb of Diane at Anet 312

Medal Struck with the Effigy of Diane 312

CHAPTER I

Prelude

CHAPTER I

Prelude

> "Meanwhile I entreat you to bear remembrance of him who never had, who never knew, but one God and one love, and I assure you that you shall have no shame to have given me the name of servant. Which I entreat you to keep for me for ever."
>
> —*Henri II.*

> "Ah well, see how it often befalls how that to rise to the topmost degree would make it seem that the abyss is on high."
>
> —*Diane de Poitiers.*

MYTHOLOGY makes Diana the daughter of Latona. But she is the child of the running wells, the deep shades of the woods, the mysteries of solitude. All chaste elements of nature, all purities of soul, have the Dorian goddess for their symbol. Sister of Phoebus, she is the moon. Tall and slim and exquisite she tops by a head the wandering troop of the nymphs. Her eyes have a sideling look. Her nostril flutters. Her hips, narrow like a boy's, her long legs suggest the swift runner. Image of activity, of physical and moral strength, she is the glory of the forests. Cold she is as the planet she personifies. Cruel she is, she flees from Actaeon, she slays Callisto. Juno cries fie upon her heart of a wild fierce lioness. She is Hecate that

in Tauris delights in the blood of the victims. But at Athens she is the beneficent one. She is invoked in sickness, for it is in the forest that all purifying and healing essences are locked away in the secret caskets of the herbs:

To the most kind, the most beautiful goddess.

She offers the tired body, the weary mind, the balsamic fragrance of the woods for their refreshing. She never loved except Endymion, yet never kissed him save asleep, that it might be no troth to chain her freedom. She is energy in abstinence. She leads the cohort of youths and maidens in the gymnasium race, younger eternally than they. She is vigour, health, poise in serenity.

§ §

Thus mythology tells us of the celestial Diana. She who bore her name with so much splendour that she has so to speak fixed and determined its human meaning, did she know her divine sister's symbol, at once cruel and tutelary, chaste and formidable, to draw from it an example, a suggestion, a discipline? Or did the gods please to incarnate for once that type of woman dwelling in memories as a dream, a pure and inaccessible ideal, to fix her imperious and imperishable image for ever in our memories that forget old myths and are heedless of their teaching?

Coming in that epoch when ancient beauties came to birth again, the celebrated favourite, of the highest culture, knew how to mould her life after her model, a life that an accidental likeness of name, of physical shape, of temperament, made natural to her. It is certain that she designed and shaped her own legend. All the representations she left of herself, the emblems she adopted, and the ineffaceable imprint of which she left on every work that emanated from her tenacious will, everything denotes the definite desire to be identified or compared with the goddess of Ephesus. Like her she was kind, inflexible, free, demanded sacrifices, offerings, took and gave, and loved only once, weaving over that love the glamour and mystery of night, which makes it more intoxicating still.

A powerful personality has for sole history the judgments it arouses. And so for anyone who knows himself destined to be, for the present and the future, an object of worship, of scandal, of curiosity, the first care is to guide those judgments aright.

But there is the legend that one creates oneself, consciously or unconsciously, by reason of a certain shape of body or face, by reason of certain heedless or deliberate words. There is also the legend set afoot by enemies, exploiting the outward seemings that lend themselves to their designs. To disentangle from the two contrary intents—embellishment and disparage-

ment—a real personality, that is the difficult and exciting task of the poet. It is by starting from this fragile double basis (what a person wished to appear and what others wish to make us believe about him), that we discover what he really was, just as we know the true features of a face from a comparing of portraits and caricatures. Into each there enter true strokes, the exact proportion of which can in the end be apprehended.

But how does it come that no one has seriously tried to do this for Diane de Poitiers? Not one master knew how, or desired, to contemplate this exalted lady without prejudice. She remains the prey of calumniators. Illustrious, she is yet unknown. Not that, like her kinswoman Anne de Beaujeu, she disdained renown and so sank into oblivion. Unceasing publicity in her own times ensured her surviving, but at the cost of extraordinary misunderstanding. Her shadow, her name are always present, continually recalled, wrongly and without regard to truth. The Huguenot pamphlets, which made her their living target, left their wake of lies behind them. And that is the trail along which deceived enquirers hunt. No one has dealt with their deliberate misstatements of facts, which a mere comparison of dates disposes of, or their exaggerations the motives of which are easy to perceive. We generally prefer to fall in with current opinion. The average of

men likes best in a woman (especially if she is beautiful or was beautiful) what vulgarizes her, diminishes her, and consequently delivers her over to them, rather than what distinguishes her, makes her great, and renders her inaccessible.

Original in a different way, Diane is as special as the beloved daughter of Louis XI. More human, more feminine, she yet carried that femininity to such perfection that she escapes even those who love nothing in a woman but the woman. We must first of all agree on the meaning of this somewhat compromised word "femininity". I think men understand by it that which ensures their preponderance, that weakness (victorious none the less) whose weapons are deceit and cunning, coquetry made up of both.

These things—whether qualities or defects are of little consequence—are unknown and foreign to the *Grant' Sénéchalle*. She never stooped to lie and never cared to use cunning, her beauty made it unnecessary for her to be a coquette, having rather to defend itself against desire than to provoke it. Yet she has a very bad reputation, and the common folk, like the great historians, have no hesitation in ranking her among the high-born courtesans. We must next understand what this word 'courtesans' means. Two things mark them: the number of their lovers and their venality. A woman who loved but once, and who, being born

rich and powerful, had no legitimate care except to manage her fortune, to add lustre to her family, is a woman of ambition, not a courtesan.

But accepted as such by an age-long misconception, she could not but tempt many writers seeking for amorous lives to exaggerate and vulgarize thereby. Tempt them she did indeed, to leave them speedily dissatisfied. Under dispassionate study her life belies her reputation, and that reputation is the only thing that could ensure the success of a book issued under such a label. Her true interest lies elsewhere, upon another plane, loftier, wider far, hard to grasp, to reach, to explain, above all made up of contradictions. She was a creature of desires, but desires that transcend the flesh. Like Anne de Beaujeu, Ruler of France, like the Marquise de Maintenon, who was France's queen, she is wrapped round in mystery, a mystery made not of silence but of symbols. If she inscribed its signs on all the monuments she inspired, it was to point the way of research, not to guide it. The nocturnal crescent, cold and cruel and sickle-slender, indicates her kinship (not identity) with the cold goddess, proud but alive, avid, who loved but once, with a love in which the body, though not denied, was not the only pretext. Diana is not Venus, she is her free companion.

§ §

And so we had to come down to our own times to be able to explain her to some without scandal, even as Anne of France or François d'Aubigné. We had to come to where we are now, or at any rate to come back, to find indulgent ears and minds, open to their true history; to allow also the reasons, which are very human ones, for the ignorance in which it was sought to keep them. If Mme. de Poitiers' physical beauty became the ideal type of her epoch; if sculptors, painters, decorators, goldsmiths took from her the watchwords of their art, it appears that her soul escaped even her contemporaries. The marvellous romance of her life, the sureness of her judgment, the exactness of her taste, had to await our age to be admitted and admired in their complex simplicity.

There are some who even now can hardly be brought to suspect that there can be an activity other than of the senses; that in any case they cannot be the sole centre round which our acts revolve. Barely can we make them understand that a woman—especially a beautiful woman—can have established her sentimental life on another plane than that of vulgar intrigues, and that she can desire to occupy her faculties in other diversions than gallantry. This abnormal enfranchisement is only allowed in those who take pains to clothe themselves in fustian to preserve their free actions from wrongful interpretation. They consent

to give Saint Theresa, who declares that she became a nun in the first place to escape from man, and to exercise her genius for organization in peace, the benefit of the doubt. Our age is only beginning to allow nuns without the veil, abbesses without abbeys. The time is at hand without a doubt when woman will be allowed to exercise her passion unquestioned in other domains than the romantic. Then Diane will be understood; that label of the courtesan, so unjustly pinned upon her, will be done away with. Then Anne de Beaujeu and Mme. de Maintenon will be recognized in their incontestable genius, in the radiance of their high moral worth, all given a place within the circle (not overcrowded, we must recognize) of women emancipated from the senses and dedicated to their exceptional passions, which are honour and power and glory, passions noble enough to be respected.

§ §

Laying aside the question of the different opinions it awakes, let us draw near to this Image, as one of the loveliest that history offers for our contemplation. The philosopher Anaxagoras, being asked by an enquirer in his own day, (for they were about already) why he had been born, replied:

"To contemplate the sun."

That is much. And too little. Let us add to his wise word that of Jacopo de Pallerone, of the order of Saint Francis, and say that another joy is set before us, that of studying

"The variety and excellence of faces."

For in them reside the marvellous secrets of life. The play of lights and shades, inner and external as well, has for its screen the half transparent, half opaque surface of the flesh. The body is the lists in which the destinies of the world are at stake. Behind a smooth forehead is held the council of spirits that decide the birth of religions, the fall of nations, the appearance of great works. The rise or droop of an eyelid is enough to bring night or day upon the earth.

§ §

Diane had this power, and life is lovelier because she has lived. Her avidity, which some make a grievance against her, she at least did not turn into smoke, like the female Molochs into whose lap pour profitlessly the fortunes of families or the public purse. What she left behind her bears witness to what she was. Her deathless symbol stamps the age she passed through with the sign of her name. What they say (and we shall have to see if they say true) was taken from the people she returned to them in full and with usury. What brings these troops of foreigners, pouring

out of their char-à-bancs, to her still surviving homes that enshrine her noble absence? What do they quest about for in the museums that vie with one another to capture relics of her? What do they come for, save to drink in of the beauty she created? It is because of her, and of others like her, that France is rich, envied, the goal of pilgrimage, the mistress of the arts, the inspirer of the world. Through memories of her is accomplished the alliance of nations. Lures for their visits, they thus pave the way for far other designs. If Diane had faults (and we shall hunt them out), it was still to those faults we owe these treasures she bequeathed us. A very virtuous lady moving unnoticed in her widow's veils could never have achieved such a surviving, and there is something that leads us to reflect upon the egoism of virtue, and its limitations. Let us say that only the excessive has possibilities of enduring. To shine through the ages human beings must needs carry their defects and their qualities to paroxysmal length. They must first of all puzzle and confuse their contemporaries by exaggerations that create scandal, to have a chance to rouse a little interest in posterity, which cares nothing for measure or discretion. Saints, heroes, courtesans, it is in their superabundance that we slake our thirsts.

§ §

Diane had this superabundance. Not knowing whence it came, men insisted on attributing vices to her. To them then she owes it that she still lives and interests us. Her real merit, had it been better known, would have escaped the masses, utterly incapable of understanding its worth,—the subtlety of her nature, rich in contrasts and complexities. Her splendid moral and bodily health, which enabled her to dominate all around her, radiates its vitality down to ourselves, who bask in her warmth and who can understand her better than the generations before the war. We, too, are living in a period of renaissance. We, too, like the people of the sixteenth century, want to *totalize* life. The avidity of our minds, which does not omit the full realization of our bodies, links us, passing over the intervening centuries, with that fruitful, happy, enquiring time, when men and women measured their living, equal forces in the same domains. The ancient huntress and the mistress of Henri II have waited for our day to see the revival of their forgotten cult. To no purpose do prejudices, lies, the lapse of time veil and bedim their faces. "In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird" says the Bible. The hour comes when we need those faces, when we must have the comfort, the support of their examples. We breathe at our ease, forgetting the heavy breath of the second-rate that press thick around us, only in their recovered

presence. We need to frequent in intimacy and for long hours the affirmers of life, life that is calumniated and shrunken in school formulas. At no time more than in this turbulent and confused sixteenth century was there such ardent—sometimes dangerous—exalting of the present. It is unnecessary to name Rabelais. Or to repeat the hardly needed counsel of Ronsard

Vivez si m'en croyez n'attendez à demain.

The testimony of Calvin is more surprising. Serious reformer as he was, he cannot prevent himself from following the haunting rhythm of his age, which at the same time he is fain to admonish.

"The Lord," he says, "does not bid us to leave all, and that he that hath goods shall lay them aside. He does not destroy human contracts, means of policy that men employ among one another to earn their bread, but merely reduces them to uprightness and truth.

"When ye behold in spring how the earth opens her bosom and unfolds her riches, lo God showing himself, and passing by."

Even in his "Institutes" he teaches his readers:

"How we should make use of this present life and its comforts; alongside of the necessary we ought in life to give place to pleasure and delight."

No one more than Diane de Poitiers gives the feeling of this plenitude of being and fulfillment of a

destiny she shaped and ordered to her own will. In her company we breathe the bracing air of the heights. We are not to exalt her without enquiry, to admire her without understanding. We must clear away from her face the cloudy legend that dims and debases it. We must know the truth of her by the help of authentic documents, by following step by step her life, which was without mystery and in the open, about which it is utterly impossible to be mistaken unless of set and deliberate intent. We must place her in her true rank, in her own time, and follow the tests and trials she surmounted, the difficulties she overcame, the chances, the opportunities of which she took intelligent advantage, yet without using blameworthy or mean devices. The Sénéchalle was great by her birth—why should she have behaved like a low woman, who to get out of her native mud must first wallow in it to the eyes? She became greater still, and more goodly always, and was the dazzling pinnacle, the glorious achievement of her ancient house. If unwittingly some prejudice displays itself in the course of these pages, it will be because among all the innumerable shadowy human figures that pass and passed lightly upon the surface of the globe, not more virtuous than others, but unknown by reason of their littleness, and whose misdoings interest no man (let us not be too prompt to lift the veil of virtue covering

persons of honour and renown), we are ready to take the part of those who left a durable mark upon their own time, those whose potent personality is carved in relief upon the grey and shifting ground of the nameless masses, who fill our thoughts with an image of beauty, a feeling of greatness, and whose opulence enlarges us, who justify the pride we must needs have in our race, of which they are one manifestation.

"Car ceux-là seuls sont morts qui n'ont rien laissé d'eux."

CHAPTER II

Childhood Days in Valentinois

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Childhood Days in Valentinois

THE psychology of every individual is made up of the superimposed psychologies of his race, his family, his group. It is important to know whence Diane sprung, what went to her composition, in order to know whither she was inevitably destined to go, following her natural bent, whither she was fain to go, following the upward trend of her desire.

Saint-Vallier was the cradle of her family. The Château was then very nearly what it is still. The moats were filled in and the upper part of the donjon demolished in 1812. We are still shown in it the room occupied by Henri II and his mistress. It is set at the highest point of the town, built four square, with towers at each corner. Strongly walled about, it had its entrances from the town and from outside the town. It was composed besides of a range of buildings for the linen-women, the poultry-yard, the stables, the wells, the tennis-ground in front of the gardens, the orchard and the vineyard. Admirably situated at the confluence of the Rhone and the Galaure on the Domitian Way, Saint-Vallier was a halting place for the Roman legions. It was called Oisole in those days,

the "Little-Bear". A monastery founded there and dedicated to Saint Valerius gave it its later name. The date of the founding of the priory cannot be exactly determined. It must be sought for somewhere between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Its first inmates followed the rule of Saint Augustine. Pope Urban the Fifth joined them to the Abbey of Saint-Ruff de Valence, and thereupon the priory expanded mightily. It counted not less than twelve canons. The cloister, the church and the buildings testify by their architectural sumptuousness to the wealth of the community.

Dauphiné then bore the title of the Viennese Province, and was part of the Kingdom of Burgundy. It fell under the sway of the Kings of Provence, who gave its government to various Counts, among whom were the Counts d'Albon, who took possession of it. In 1184, Béatrice, who became Comtesse d'Albon and de Vienne on the death of her brother without issue, married Hugues III, Count of Burgundy, and Saint-Vallier became a dependency of Burgundy. Here mustered the troops that Hugues led to Philip Augustus and Richard the Third for the third crusade. In his absence his son Eudes governed the county in 1192. A descendant of Eudes, Hypolie, married Aymar de Poitiers, third of the name and Comte de Valentinois, in 1272. In 1349, Humbert II, the Dauphin of the

THE CHÂTEAU OF SAINT-VALLIER BEFORE THE CONDEMNATION OF JEAN DE POITIERS
From the crayon sketch of Monsieur de la Charlerie extracted from the *procès criminel* of "Jehan de Poytiers" by G. Guiffrey

Viennois, sold Dauphiné to France for 120,000 gold florins. The contract was made in the Bois de Vincennes with Philippe de Valois. Aymar V de Poitiers then held the office of Lieutenant-General of the country, for the first Dauphin Charles of France. In 1381, by the marriage of Charles de Poitiers with Simone de Méry, the house made a great advance in its fortunes, which never ceased growing. The Comtes de Saint-Vallier treated on an equal footing with the King. Froissart praises one of them in his Chronicles (Vol. I, Chapters CV and CVII). They were indeed the first lords of the Comtat-Venaissin, possessing the lands of Sérignan besides, where a strong castle served them as residence, and where Diane made lengthy stays. From the fifteenth century they likewise acquired reversionary rights upon the marquisate of Crotona in Italy, in the following fashion. In 1414 Nicholas Ruffo, Marquis of Crotona or Contron, being an exile in France, married Marguerite, the daughter of Louis de Poitiers. As Nicholas died without male issue, his title and his arms passed to the house of Poitiers.

So much power entails great cost. Magnificence was to be the family passion. In order to pay his debts Louis gave up the counties of Diois and Valentinois to the Dauphin, subsequently Charles VII, on condition of receiving 500,000 gold crowns. Charles took the

lands and never paid the money he had promised. This was the origin of the just claims of the descendants of Louis with reference to these counties unfairly retained by the crown.

Aymar succeeded this spendthrift Louis in 1454. We see him pursuing his family's ambitions. They all show a singular aptitude for rising in the world. Their pride makes them feel at ease only in the highest places. They cannot move without pomp and splendour. What could they wish for more than they possessed? A royal alliance? Here it is.

At this time the Dauphin Louis was entering upon a struggle with his father, Charles. Exiled to Dauphiné, he spent the long days in trying his hand at the government of his province. He sent to every corner of Europe for new manuscripts, for he was an amateur of novelties and of reading. The seriousness he brought to his duties and to his studies did not prevent his youth from self-expression. And thus he lived his hour of romance, for which his subsequent aridity may be forgiven him. He loved. The lady of his heart was Marguerite de Sassenage, of an ancient family descended from the fairy Mélusine. Louis spent his days in reading and his nights with his mistress—fitting vigil for the man who was to become the fervent lover of France. It was during one of his nocturnal excursions that Charles VII sent to put him in prison, accus-

ing him, perhaps not without reason, of having had Agnès Sorel poisoned at Jumièges. Warned in time, he escaped by the window, and got away to Flanders, to the court of his cousin of Burgundy.

From this love affair of the Dauphin, who was later Louis XI, there was born a daughter Marie, recognized as of the blood royal. Aymar de Poitiers, on the lookout for chances, married her in 1467. Unhappily she died in childbed. But the Comte de Saint-Vallier always regarded himself as allied with the King's house. As such he kept all his favour with Louis XI. On various occasions we shall see him profiting by the favours of his father-in-law. The Dauphin Charles being later brought up at Amboise, the harsh king would have no one come near him except a few privileged persons whose devotion he knew. The following recommendations were written to Bourré:

"Monsieur du Plessis, I am sending M. de Saint-Vallier to Amboise to-morrow. I request that you will go down into the town and entertain him to dinner. Take him to see Monseigneur le Dauphin, so that he may come back immediately. And adieu."

At the marriage of Charles and Margaret of Austria, celebrated at Amboise on June 23, 1483, and annulled later, Aymar de Poitiers held the nuptial sheet with Jacques de Brézé, with no notion that their two houses

would one day unite, through one woman, their realized hopes and ambitions.

As soon as he was widowed, Aymar had married again on November 28, 1472, the bride being Anne de la Tour, of the family of the Counts of Auvergne and Boulogne, who held considerable commands under the Ducs de Bourbon. From this union he had several children, among them Jehan, Diane's father, who was born at the Château of Saint-Vallier.

A strange person was this Jehan, of extraordinary vitality, agile, enterprising, charming, greedy for offices and honours like all his folk. At seventeen he escaped, with his father, a mysterious death to which François of Luxemburg had devoted them by means of enchantments and magic spells. He was at home in the *entourage* of Anne de Bourbon, Comtesse de Beaujeu, and became the comrade of Charles de Montpensier at that court of Moulins and Chantelle, where the greatest wealth of the period was concentrated. He pushed his fortune in this direction, and his protectors saw to it for him.

In 1489, King Charles VIII having been ill at Lyons, he went on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Embrun. Arriving at Grenoble on November 6, he set out again the next day for Amboise, where he stayed two days. He went back from there to Lyons, remaining until Christmas. That was when he settled the

JEHAN DE POITIERS, COUNT OF SAINT-VALLIER, FATHER OF DIANE
Museum of The Hermitage, Petrograd

marriage of fourteen-year-old Jehan de Poitiers to Jeanne de Baternay. Anne de Beaujeu made the arrangements with Imbert de Baternay, Seigneur du Bouchage. She loved that loyal servant who with La Trémoille had helped her so well against the enterprises of Louis of Orléans, during that foolish war. With these two she had saved France from a new English invasion. It should be noted that this Seigneur du Bouchage, Diane's grandfather, was remarkable for his skill in affairs, his unwearied activity, his unalterable fidelity. Contemporary manuscripts are full of letters about him or addressed to him. These show the considerable share he took in politics and the high place he held in the Kingdom. Imbert gave his daughter 20,000 gold crowns. Guillaume de Poitiers, Seigneur de Clérieu, the brother of Guillaume, Seigneur de Saint-Vallier, and several others, drew the articles for this marriage, on March 14, in the house of Imbert de Verei, Seigneur de Belmont. By this alliance the property of the house of Baternay passed to the heirs of the house of Saint-Vallier, still further increasing its wealth, its influence, its nobility. It was indeed justifying its device, a burning lantern reversed: "*Qui me alit me extinguit*".

Thus by his birth and his marriage Jehan found himself linked with the all-powerful house of Bourbon, with which he even had ties of blood; Jeanne de

la Tour Aymar's wife, had a brother Jean, married to Jeanne de Bourbon, the widow of Jean II, the eldest brother of Anne de Beaujeu.

Children came rapidly to the young household of Saint-Vallier. Guillaume, Diane, Françoise, Louise. Tremendously attached to his rights and prerogatives, Jehan de Poitiers claimed them stubbornly. When Louis gave the lands of Valentinois to Caesar Borgia, raising them on the occasion to a duchy, he protested solemnly. Even if his grandfather had sold them to Charles VII, the price had never been paid. The contract was null and void accordingly. Louis XII did not trouble to hold back for such trifles. The friendship of the Pope's son was useful to him to procure the annulment of his marriage with Jehanne of France, and he was willing to pay the price for it. Jehan had accepted Aymar's inheritance *sous bénéfice d'inventaire* only. He therefore claimed, with good reason, to be the legitimate owner in right of his ancestors, and their feoffee in trust. He set on foot a lawsuit for the restoring of the counties usurped, and appealed to the Grenoble *parlement* against the *procureur-general* of the King-Dauphin. The litigation was hot but in vain. It was given to the daughter to win his case by other means than legal proceedings.

That girl who was to carry the qualities of her race to such a height, to pursue its greatness with such de-

termination, to be both the culmination and the end of a great name, Diane, was born on December 31, 1499, the child of this same Jehan de Poitiers, Seigneur de Saint-Vallier, Marquis de Cotrone, Vicomte de l'Estoile, Baron de Clérieux, de Sérignan, de Corbempré, de Chantemerle, etc., lastly the true Comte de Valentinois et de Diois.

In what exact spot did she see the light of day? Later she took pleasure in calling herself Dame de Saint-Vallier, because of her ancestors who had borne that name for three centuries. But there is no proof that she was born in that château rather than elsewhere. We might perhaps have found a note of her baptism in the registers of the sacraments celebrated at the priory. But the oldest baptismal register of the parish, kept in the archives of the civil state, is later than the year of her birth (1568), and its predecessors must have vanished in the wars of religion, when the papers of the priory were looted, 1562, 1567, 1568. So it was at Saint-Vallier, or at l'Étoile (a gift made by the Dauphin Jean to Aymar in 1206) or at Pizançon (a gift from Gaston de Clérieu to Aymar in 1323) that we must suppose Diane to have been born. Her grandfather was still living at Saint-Vallier. He signed his will there in 1510, and was interred in the family vault, situated in the choir of the present church.

The landscape upon which the infant opened her

eyes is marvellous, in the huge circus of the mountains of the Vivarais, on the banks of the Rhône. Is it authentic, the horoscope a wandering soothsayer drew at her birth? Without believing it we quote it as a curiosity.

Celle
Quy de Jehan de Poytiers naistra
Et quy Dianne se nommera
Teste de neige saulvera
  Puis teste d'or perdra.
Mais en saulvant comme en perdant
Pleurs versera icelle enfant
Cependant resjouissez-vous
Pour ce quy gouvernera tous
  Icelle.

§ §

Little is known of Diane's life as a child. It must be reconstructed by the help of stray documents, discovered far from the sources where they were searched for. She breathed the air of her own day, still puling and in the charge of the women, she was remote and aloof from the events that were taking place around her. Her father held the front of the stage. Her mother, who disappeared before long, played a subdued part. Life was full of colour and splendour about the child. Many were the princely visitors who halted

in Dauphiné. In that sixteenth century travel was all the fashion. It is surprising to consider the movements of people of all kinds. The nobles were always going to and fro with their train and their abundant baggage. The roads were always cumbered with men-at-arms on their way from one place to another (it was the road to Milan), travelling merchants, pilgrims seeking shrines, poets seeking shelter, slow foot monks murmuring prayers, spae-wives offering to cast horoscopes. The province was more full of life than in our own times, even with all the motors that go through it in every direction, for they pass swiftly on their way without halting, while then men sojourned in the regions they went through. And then there were centres of art, of markets, of defence. Diane saw all this movement that entertained her baby eyes. At six years old she rode on horseback, already strong and sturdy; she read books, already curious of mind. It is certain that she was early placed as demoiselle with some great lady, for it was the custom to send noble children, both girls and boys, to powerful protectors, where they were trained in the world, and acquired friendships and influence. In those days no one was an isolated individuality. The game of alliances, of political parties, was being played all the time. Almost from its birth a child was a force, and destined to such or such a place, which must needs be aimed at, settled, held to,

all well beforehand. He had no family life. As soon as he came out of his swaddling clothes he became the representative of a social power. It was the name in him that had to be kept renowned and if possible feared. Boy or girl then, the child was placed in a princely court with a lord or a lady of his own age, whose companion and, later, whose stay and supporter he would thenceforward be. Some have supposed that Diane was sent to Louise of Savoy, to be with her children François and Marguerite. This assertion rests upon no evidence, and it is impossible that it should be correct, for the reason that follows.

Anne de Beaujeu had received and adopted a niece of her husband's, a little girl of five, who had just lost her mother, and whose father, a cadet of the house of Savoy, was poor. That child was Louise. She dowered her and married her at thirteen to the Comte d'Angoulême. Nothing could be more dismal and mean than the little court of Cognac, where poverty reigned with discord. Two children were soon born, Marguerite in 1492 and François in 1494. Widowed at eighteen, destitute, moneyless, Louise was succoured by her aunt de Bourbon, at whose château at Moulins her father died on November 19, 1497. Anne gave him princely obsequies. For all this kindness she reaped nothing but ingratitude. That niece, embittered and ambitious, kept a forward-looking eye, set-

ting upon her children all her hopes of a turn in fortune's wheel. On the death of Charles VII, and the accession of Louis XII, Louise of Savoy left her retreat and came to the court in Touraine. She followed the King to Chinon, to Blois, to Amboise in 1499, to Romorantin, living in a kind of suspicious dependence and servility. There was no levée to wait upon her rising, with her children: she was regarded with suspicion by Anne of Brittany, who was exasperated by her presence and her conduct. At length there came to pass the secret betrothal of François and Claude de France, while the queen was away in Brittany. Only in 1506, when the marriage of François and Claude was fixed, was Louise's household better appointed. She had now fifteen gentlemen, twelve demoiselles or women in waiting, seventy-eight officers. Now at this time Diane was six, and too young to leave her mother's care. That apostrophe to Diana, which de Maulde describes as found in a history note-book of François de Valois cannot be meant for her.

> Cynthia cresce. Sua coeat tua cornua luce
> Aurea, Gryneis stabis adulta comis.

The little girl who was still riding over the Vivarais hills was not yet thinking of her lunar symbol.

Louise of Savoy went back to Cognac in 1508, after the marriage of her daughter to the Duc d'Alen-

çon. She was thus parted from her children, and what would she have done with a little girl like the Comte de Saint-Vallier's daughter? We must look elsewhere for the preceptress of the child of destiny.

Let us recall that Jehan de Poitiers was an habitué of the court of Moulins, related by marriage to the Bourbons. His father was for a time a brother-in-law of Anne de Beaujeu. Political ties, family ties, marching lands, everything united them in one and the same interest. It was at Chantelle, at Moulins, along with Suzanne de Bourbon, that Diane was placed, receiving, to her greater adornment, the graces of the teaching of the great daughter of France. At her side she learned the tradition of the ancient Court, examples of dignity, *sagesse*, greatness. She learned how Anne married, in obedience to her father, a man twenty years older than herself, who made her happy. She learned from her highborn kinswoman the dignity of her rank, the deportment that became it, finesse of mind, delicacy of taste, and the sense of a very French tradition of which she was to be the unbending champion. She imitated her preceptress in her disdain for low intrigues, and the determined insistence on what was due to her, the art of looking to her own interests, so as to oppose to her enemies a strength against which their continual assaults were broken. At Chantelle they studied Boëthius, Plato, the Fathers of

ANNE DE BEAUJEU, DUCHESS OF BOURBON, DAUGHTER OF LOUIS XI, WHO EDUCATED DIANE DE POITIERS AND MARRIED HER TO LOUIS DE BRÉZÉ

École de Clouet, Bibliothèque Nationale

the Church, there Diane acquired her taste for fine books, and in later years her library was modelled on that of Moulins. There she grew up in horror of the intrigues and the coquetries peculiar to women. Anne of France was chaste, and without passion save a passion for honour. She had a method of education peculiar to herself, free alike from discouragement and from illusion. She was an ardent feminist. As for eight years she governed the kingdom alone, she was sure of her own worth, and believed that the period of struggling was about to begin for women; thus she demanded that to sustain them they should have will, a sense of logic, personality. Girls ought to learn Latin from the cradle. At seven they ought to be able to carry on a conversation, at thirteen years of age they should marry. These ideas are those of her period, she was merely a superlative illustration of them. This was how Isabella of Castile brought up her daughters. This is how Louise of Savoy spoke to Marguerite.

"Between you and men the functions are different, but the virtues should be the same."

This intellectual equipment did not prevent practical instruction. A woman ought to know medicine and cooking. Read through that marvellous book of the *Enseignements d'Anne de France à sa fille Suzanne de Bourbon*, in which the great daughter of Louis XI "a true figure by Michael Angelo, lofty and

severe as a cathedral" sets out her laws for adolescent maids of all the ages. We see her, in a miniature by Bourdichon that adorns the volume, with her daughter beside her, and at the end of the room her young companions of noble birth who listen with devoted attention. Diana is among them. Moulins was a school of good manners, where the youths never spoke to the maidens save kneeling on one knee. Anne of France and Anne of Brittany were called the "Mothers of the Virgins" because they knew how to gather round them those who were to become the flowers of the courts, and how to guide and mould their minds. Diane de Saint-Vallier was the loveliest of them all. She was the spiritual daughter of her aunt de Beaujeu. Suzanne, her child in the flesh was inadequate and sickly, and in any case disappeared ere long. Diane was to shed lustre on this superior education, like the Duchesse de Bourbon's adopted son, Charles de Montpensier. Both of them, thanks to their preceptress, were to be princes of the Renaissance. When later on, a long time later on, upon the downfall of the Constable, the Grant' Sénéchalle got François I to give her the beautiful manuscript of the *Enseignements* for her library at Anet, it was not to be prized for its priceless illuminations alone. It was a souvenir, a recovered suggestion. In it there dwelt all her happy childhood, and the whole of the intellectual, moral,

ANNE DE BEAUJEU AND HER DAUGHTER SUZANNE DE BOURBON WITH LADIES OF HONOUR AMONG WHOM IS DIANE DE POITIERS

Miniature of Jean Bourdichon, from "Les Enseignements d'Anne de France," Library of The Hermitage, Petrograd

worldly, political education she had from her aunt de Beaujeu, to whom she owed all that she was to become—paramount and sovereign. Chantelle foretold Anet. The victory of Diane de Poitiers was to be the revenge for the unjust defeat of Anne of France.[1]

§ §

Life moved swiftly. A woman ought to be married or on the way to marriage at thirteen. It was the Duchesse de Bourbon who had made the match between Jehan de Poitiers and Jeanne de Baternay. It was she again who was to interest herself in their eldest daughter, her little *demoiselle d'honneur*, in whom she recognized a mind of her own temper, one of those women of 'great doing' the image of whom she loved to evoke. Did she not write again that a girl should have neither choice, nor desire, nor wish of her own? The maintenance of fortunes, the rise of the house, depend on marriages from which the heart is absent. Diane was fourteen. She was beautiful. Not with the conventional beauty that she is conventionally given. She was strong of body and mind, well endowed with health, with knowledge, with judgment. Even at this time she must have been very proud. Her father's favourite daughter, mingling with the noblest persons of her day, she unhesitatingly fell in with the choice

[1] See *Anne de Beaujeu, Roi de France*. Plon.

made for her by the duchess with whom she had lived and the father she knew to be so clever at doing well for himself. It was in this year 1514 that Jehan obtained the letters patent establishing the salt-house of Saint-Vallier.

And thus was fixed her marriage with Louis de Brézé, Grant' Sénéchal of Normandy, the widower of Catherine de Dreux, Lady of Esneval, and forty years older than herself. It seems that in 1514 there was merely a promise of marriage; in the contract may be read as follows:

"Ratification by Louis de Brézé and Diane de Poitiers his wife of marriage contracted in the year 1514, and clauses of renunciation therein contained dated in the year 1516."

Later they did not fail to blame the girl on account of this ill-sorted marriage with a hunchback 'old man', and to ascribe it to her precocious ambition. I have already said that women had no share in choosing their husbands. Their parents and kin chose for them. Diane could only obey. Doubtless without repugnance, for she saw in this a door opening on a high life. The blood of Poitiers was ever on fire with ambition and pride. The strength of beings like her is opportunity, which knows how to get from circumstances, from outward seemings that even appear unfavourable, the best possible returns. For the moment Diane has only

to obey, and to see in this union the first dawnings of a destiny the phases of which will be in her own hands.

The Brézé-Maulevriers were sprung from Geoffroy, sieur de la Varenne, father of Jehan de Brégé, husband of Tiphaine du Guesclin, niece of the Constable of France. They were the most renowned huntsmen in the Kingdom. In the fourteenth century, Jehan, Louis' grandfather, was quoted in the "Trésor de Venerie" as a cunning hunter. Pierre de Brézé was bravest of the brave. A companion of Dunois and Xaintrailles, he took his post in the vanguard at the battle of Montlhéry (1465).

"The first man who died there," says Commines, "was he."

If Diane's father was Louis XI's son-in-law, Louis de Brézé's was his brother-in-law. He married Charlotte of France, daughter of Charles VII and Agnès Sorel. Having taken his wife in adultery with Louis de Lavergne, his squire, he drove his sword through her in her bed (May 31, 1477). Condemned to death, he obtained his pardon for a fine of 100,000 gold crowns and the confiscation of all his possessions. Louis XI restored them to Louis de Brézé. The terrible husband only obtained this favour, it was believed, because of his qualities as a huntsman, which made him very precious to the king. He wrote to him as follows:

Sire,

In all the humility I can to your good grace I commend me, please you to know, Sire, that I am sending you the swiftest and boldest greyhound bitch in your realm, and if you would like to have good whelps from one of your white greyhounds, have her lined by which so ever you please, for she throws the stoutest greyhounds in the world, and the most goodliest. If so it please you, when she is lined, leave her to me in charge, no man in the world will bring you up greyhounds better than will I, etc.

Written from your Château of Rouen, the VIth day of January 1481-1482.

BRÉZÉ.

It was this same Jacques who wrote the long drawn-out praises of Mme. de Bourbon. With Robertet he was her impassioned champion.

Qui vouldra veoir l'artifice des dieux
Le choix exquis de royal géniture,

Qui vouldra veoir le cours de vérité
Tout cimenté d'honneur et de raison
Et le chef-d'oeuvre, issu de la maison
De fleur de lys; par divine alliance
Il luy fault veoir le corps d'Anne de France.

Louis his son was therefore cousin german to Mme. de Beaujeu. To these ties of close kinship was added a perfect harmony of tastes, he being also a great hunter and she a mistress in this goodly pastime. From him we learn that, in accordance with her tempera-

ment, she hunted coldly, methodically, identified the tracks, marshalled the attack, set off with her dogs, cheered, and handled a pretty spear. In the hunting annals of the time we hear of a certain Souillart, a dog of breed, that a poor gentleman had desired to give to the Duchess, but which Louis de Brézé had taken. Having heard high praises of this dog's beauty and excellence, she sent him a brach named Baude, by which he had fifteen whelps, among them Mirault, Céraut, Gombard, Meigret, Marteau, etc. (Later, François I fortified this breed by crossing it with a tawny yellow dog called Miraut, which the Admiral d'Annebaut had given him, and from which Maronnay, the *lieutenant de la vénerie*, raised a breed of excellent dogs stronger than the others.)

Diane shared the tastes of her betrothed. A clever horsewoman, she went on the headlong gallops she loved her whole life long. Exhilarating sport, early morning starts, gay animation in the courtyard of the château, hounds in couple, grooms, falconers, huntsmen clad in green, in red, in grey, ladies on hackneys caparisoned in velvet, plumed hats, boots of red damascened leather, skirts looped up above the knee, the sound of the bugles, all ravished her burning youth, already triumphant. The Grant' Sénéchal puts this wholesome intoxication into rhyme.

Dieu sait en quelle joye mon coeur
Sera de les ouyr chasser.
Je ne crois pas qu'il soit chaleur
Ne travail qui me sceut matter,
L'on y perd toute mélancolie,
A mal fere ne peuvent hanter
Gens qui usent de tel métier.

CHAPTER III

The Grant' Sénéchalle of Normandy

1515-1531

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The Grant' Sénéchalle of Normandy
1515-1531

OF THIS Louis de Brézé, great hunter, little rhymester, splendid and faithful servant of the king, of four kings, nothing remains in the memory of man, save the notion that he was the neglected and somewhat ridiculous husband of Diane de Poitiers. And yet for her this was a noble match, with the Comte de Maulevrier, Baron de Bec-Crespin et Mauny, Seigneur de Nogent-le-Roi, Anet, Brissa, Breval and Monchauvet, grandson of Charles VII, cousin of the Duchesse de Bourbonnais and kinsman to the king. Louis was fifty, he was ugly and a hunchback, but he was powerful, rich, and kind to the girl who gave him the first fruits of her beauty and her intelligence. She was placed in the household of Claude de France. In contact with the court she became initiated into the intrigues, the ambitions of each, the characters and tendencies of all. Departure for Italy, return, the nascent dangerous love of Louise of Savoy for Charles de Bourbon, with which he amused himself, without fear of it. The tournament of Amboise, the marriage of Louis XII and Mary Tudor, the swift decline of

the king. She assumed that air of authority which soon distinguished her. Her birth, her education, before long her marriage, were all princely in degree. She was born at the very end of the fifteenth century, and preserved its tradition. If she later on welcomed the novelties of the sixteenth, she never was their dupe. Pupil and disciple of Anne of France, she knew how to choose between what must pass away and what must continue. The tone of Moulins and Chantelle would be hers; she would impose their nobility and loftiness. But silent and secret as yet, she is merely a pretty little bride-to-be, whose grace finds smiles at court. She will not hasten on her hour, she will await it in patience; Diane de Poitiers has set the compass for her life. Her horizon is a vast one. There is François d'Angoulême on the throne of France. A new age is dawning with him. The young monarch summons to his side the brilliant companions of his youth. Charles de Bourbon the first of all, whom he makes Constable at the instance of his mother Louise of Savoy, who is in love with the handsome duke; Bonnivet, Lautrec, La Trémoille, Saint-Pol. It is a gathering of young gods. The Comte de Saint-Vallier leaves his government in Dauphiné and becomes captain of a company of two hundred men-at-arms. The nobles leave their châteaux and come to the court. This is the beginning of the desertion of the soil, the fatal attraction of the

Photograph by Giraudon

LOUIS DE BRÉZÉ, HUSBAND OF DIANE
École de Clouet, Musée de Chantilly

king, the death of feudalism, the rise of the nobility that was avid of honours rather than of real prestige. François I does not see so far as that. All he wants is a goodly life, ardent and joyous, all he wants is to revel in the marvellous feast his foresighted mother had long since prepared for him. Cavalli, the Venetian agent, has left us an authentic portrait of him. "His aspect is altogether royal, so that without ever having seen his face, or his portrait, merely to look at him a stranger would say: 'That is the King'. All his movements are so noble and majestic that no prince could be his equal.

"He greatly loves to be exquisite in his attire, which is trimmed with gold lace and richly adorned, sumptuous with jewels and costly ornaments. Even the doublets are wrought and woven with gold; his shirts are infinitely fine, and he displays their embroidery in the opening of his doublet, everything in the French fashion, and the whole contributes to the exquisiteness of life and the good of health."

After praising all these qualities of his mind and his body, he expresses his wonder at the king's many misadventures, and concludes:

"One is tempted to say that his wisdom is more on his lips than in his mind."

He is before everything else a great artist, a spoiled child, gay and charming, who is better cut out for an

idle, brilliant, eldest son than a king responsible for a people. He has an extraordinary taste for beauty, and his delightful repartees place the man in the proper sphere where he belongs.

"I can make a noble, but only God makes great artists." That is already a huge stride in advance of the epoch still just gone by, when aristocracy made a boast of not being able to write. He looked more closely to the gallant ordering of his court, of his own carriage, than to the interests of the realm and to his political acts.

"A noble, however high and mighty he may be, could not receive a seigneur, however great he may be, in his house or his château, better than by bringing with him at the first meeting a beautiful woman, a fine horse, and a handsome hound."

A decorative preoccupation that fixes a whole style. Diane will appear to us as indeed the living illustration of this programme, and against this reign as against the next one she will pass great and noble, a lovely woman mounted on a fine horse, followed by a handsome greyhound, embodying in her single person the whole beauty of her time.

§ §

She enters upon the stage of the world with the new king whose reign is to be her apprenticeship. He is

FRANÇOIS I, ABOUT 1515
École de Clouet, Bibliothèque Nationale

twenty, she is fifteen. It is not to be wondered at that it was supposed that these two, who had long known each other, were lovers. There was nothing of the kind. Diane entered upon life shielded by the principles, not severe but serious, of her aunt de Beaujeu. She was to put into action first of all her formulas of life before following her ambitious discipline.

François I was consecrated at Reims, on Thursday the twenty-fifth day of January, 1514. At the ceremony there were present his mother, Mesdames de Bourbon, de Vendôme, the ladies and the demoiselles of Queen Claude. She saw the faery spectacle of those fêtes, those processions, of which the court of Moulins had given her a foretaste.

"From the hôtel de ville came forth the archers, the citizens clad in black velvet and in cramoisie, the seventeen guilds, the tipstaves, the provost of Paris, the *lieutenant criminel* of the Châtelet; the four generals of France, clad in black velvet, the lords of the Chamber of Accounts, the court and parliament. The Councillors, the *chevaliers* of the watch, sergeants, archers of the guard with haquetons and oriflammes adorned with the famous salamander

"Nutrisco et extinguo".

"Then the marshals, the seigneurs de la Palice, de Lautrec, de Boisy; then the king's gentlemen pen-

sioners, captains and chamberlains, the eight masters of requests in ordinary and reporters of the Chancery. The king's seal in a casket of blue velvet, with massive gold fittings.

"Monseigneur the Chancellor.

"The thirteen pages . . .

"Three gentlemen one of whom carried the royal hat, of blue velvet sewn with gold fleurs-de-lis, the blue mantle of the same, the sword with massive gold-mounted scabbard, blue sewn with fleurs-de-lis.

". . . Thereafter came the king clad in white silk, his horse caparisoned with silver covered with jewels. On the right Monseigneur Louis d'Orléans, the Grand Chamberlain, clad in crimson velvet, with gold embroideries of the rays of the sun.

"In front of the bards was a figure of a young eagle in gold, its head uplifted to the skies and carrying its nest on its spread wings.

" . . . And (the Duc d'Orléans) wore a velvet bonnet, upon which was the great diamond of the house of Dunois, cut mirror fashion, from which hung three big pearls, and then a very rich pear-shaped pearl, and other stones of great value.

"On the left (of the king) the Duc de Longueville. Around the king the Scots guard, and behind, Messieurs d'Alençon, de Bourbon, grand constable of France, and Monseigneur de Vendôme. . . .

" . . . With the said princes went Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier, and Monseigneur the Grant' Sénéchal of Normandy, each leading his band of two hundred gentlemen, were well mounted and barded and richly accoutred, all differently, some in cloth of gold, others in cloth of silver, satin brocade and velvet of various colours, each having on his thigh and in his fist his spear, and at the tip a little banner of red and yellow taffeta."

Always together, Diane's father and her betrothed adorn the same processions, "very near the king's person". They are preparing her place for her, that unique place, in which she will unite the power and influence of their two allied houses.

To-day she is but a young beauty who strikes every eye. Not the conventional beauty given her in paintings that have nothing at all to do with her. Tall, well balanced on long limbs, she has the vigour of a sportswoman who has drunk deep of the air of the hills of the Vivarais, and the distinction of a princess, bathed in the air of courts. Her shape is well defined. Her complexion is a clear pink, with that white skin which she will retain until she dies, and which was a marvel. Her hair is brown, perhaps chestnut, her eyes almond-shaped, and their intelligent expression is already full of enigma. The delicate nose is slightly tilted, the chin pointed, the well-shaped lips are thin.

A firm, wholesome, thoroughly French beauty, which gives an extraordinary impression of poise and security. She is ready for the unfolding of body and mind through marriage and motherhood.

This marriage took place during the Easter festivities, on March 29, 1515, at the hôtel de Bourbon, near by the Louvre, which is another proof of the close intimacy between the two houses, and the part Anne took in the union of her maid of honour and her cousin Brézé. Saint-Vallier had no such bad idea in accepting this advantageous marriage for his daughter. We may smile as we read the verses of Victor Hugo, who in *le Roi s'amuse* tosses off one of the mistakes in history so habitual to his magic pen, which he established as gospel:

Quelle idée avait-il ce vieillard singulier [*forty*!]
De mettre dans un lit nuptial sa Diane!
Sa fille, une beauté choisie et diaphane [*as a colt!*]
Un ange que de ciel la terre avait reçu [*anything you like but no angel*]
Tout pêle-mêle avec un sénéchal bossu.

An excellent idea. There she is, provided for life, matched, made kin to the king, to the best blood in France. She enters at once into the whole spirit of her duties. In private life and in public life we follow her step by step in all her doings, in that magnificent succession of days set down in record, the splendour

Photograph by Giraudon

CLAUDE OF FRANCE, QUEEN OF FRANCE, OF WHOM DIANE DE POITIERS WAS LADY OF HONOUR

Musée de Versailles

of which still dazzles us. She follows her husband, she follows the king, she follows the queen; the events of the court all touch her, those of Normandy take possession of her, there are no secret places where she might conceal the adventures with which she will in later times be gratuitously credited. Her personality is absorbed in a decorative *ensemble* to free herself from which will take the effort of many years.

She is for a long time lady-in-waiting to Queen Claude, she is the Grant' Sénéchalle, barely has she time enough to be a mother, and her doings are known to us through the members of her princely or her family group, whose archives preserve the authentic records for us.

1515.—On April 15, at Amboise, the queen is delivered of a daughter, who dies. The King is making a progress through his kingdom, more to show himself to it than to see it himself. Entry into Bourges, entry into Moulins. On April 12 he is at Lyons, with the whole court come there to meet him. More than a league from the city there awaited him a long procession of bishops, of mitred abbots, of councillors in damask robes. On the Saône a ship tugged along by gold chains bore a great stag with white wings, and the shield of Bourbon with the device, *Espérance*. Al-

ready the pride of the constable is becoming manifest: he wants to be received under a canopy as the greatest man in the realm next to the king. But the city refuses him this honour.

This is the first stage on the way to Italy, whither François is leading his enthusiastic nobles. Brézé and Saint-Vallier accompany their master.

From the Grenoble Archives, September 14, 1515.

"Action taken by the first consul with regard to the Comte de Saint-Vallier, who is leading 10,000 men into the Duchy of Milan, in order to avert the disorders his soldiers might occasion in passing through Grenoble. The Comte de Saint-Vallier will be offered two casks of white claret and ten . . . in advance."

The ladies had gone home, leaving their noble lords to their high and vain adventure. Diane, husbandless, went with Claude to Amboise.

1516.—A note of the municipal deliberations tells us that François I, his wife, his mother and their suite entered Valence on February 14, 1516. The notables went to meet them as far as Étoile. Antoine de Dorne made them a set speech, the Queen was presented with two medals worth 100 gold crowns that she might take them under her patronage.

On March 2, a present of wine and sweetmeats was

made to the Comte de Saint-Vallier, on his marrying his daughter to the Seigneur de Clermont.

Diane was certainly present at the visit to Valence, did she remain for her sister's wedding? Probably. On April 13, we find her at Amboise, where Queen Claude was brought to bed of a daughter, Charlotte.

On May 9, she goes to Grenoble, where the archives describe the preparations to receive the queen and the regent, on their way to Chambéry to join the king who means to discharge a vow to the Blessed Vernicle.

On July 8, Saint-Vallier marries again, Françoise de Chabannes, sister of the Seigneur de La Palisse. Again it is certain that Diane stood by her father at this ceremony, which must have been marked with all the usual pomp and ceremony. But having fulfilled her duties to the Queen and to her family, she must bethink her that she is also Grant' Sénéchalle, and take her high place at her husband's side. So here she is at Rouen, at their official home, the Château de Bouvreuil.

This was an ancient house that her youth must have filled with life and animation. Built by order of Philip Augustus, it was destroyed at the end of the sixteenth century. Here had lived the d'Harcourts, the d'Estoutevilles, the Luxembourgs. Under the English domination it had harboured Clarence, York, Warwick, Dorset, Somerset; at length came the

Brézés. In one of its towers Jehanne d'Arc was held prisoner and endured her examinations. The huge hall of the Château saw Charles VIII holding his exchequer in 1485, under the surveillance of the Regent, Anne of France. And there on August 2, Diane de Brézé and her husband receive the King, who has just made his entry into Rouen. With him have come John Stuart, Duke of Albany, the Comte de Saint-Pol, Lautrec, Louis de Clèves, Artus de Gouffier, the Constable de Bourbon, Louis de la Trémoille, Jacques de Chabannes, Louis de Vendôme, Guillaume de Poitiers, sieur de Saint-Vallier, Marquis de Rotrou, chamberlain to the King and brother of Diane.

". . . Thereafter went Monseigneur le Grant' Sénéchal of Normandy, clad in cloth of gold, with his collar of the Order, and mounted on a courser of great price covered with a caparison similar to his coat. . . .

". . . Here Monsieur le Sénéchal led the children of the city. . . .

". . . Then the said Sénéchal, captain of the said town, presented its keys (to the King), in all reverence and humility. . . ."

. . . To the ringing of the bells of all the churches in Rouen . . . François I remained for twenty days, with his court, as the guest of the Brézés.

On August 1, Charles d'Alençon, being appointed

Governor of Normandy in turn made his entry, and the festivities began once more.

1517.—We lose trace of Diane for six months, during which her life is divided between her service with the queen and her duties as Grant' Sénéchalle. On the last day of February 1517, the Dauphin François was born at Amboise. On April 2, the baptism by Cardinal de Boisy took place in the church of the Château. All these repeated pregnancies, which exhausted Claude, who was far from robust, had prevented her from being crowned and from making her entry into her capital. It had to be thought of. Diane hastened from her Normandy for the usual pageantry of these ceremonies.

"She (Claude) arrived at Saint-Denis on Saturday evening, May 9, in the year of grace 1517, well companioned with princes and princesses and other lords and ladies, dignitaries of the Church and the Law, burgesses of the town. There was presented to her a canopy of white and blue silk with the arms of France and Brittany. At the entrance to the choir she finds the King, Madame Louise of Savoy, princes and princesses." Vespers were sung, then she went and kneeled on the tomb of the Kings.

"In the Church of Saint-Denis, a scaffold; in front of the high altar where there was a chair covered with

cloth of gold, under a dais, around, chairs for duchesses and countesses, covered with cloth of gold.

"The ring laid on the high altar.

"To the right of the great altar, another, draped in velvet, with the arms of France, on which were the crown and the sceptre, the hand of justice, the royal sword.

"On the following Tuesday she entered into her town and city of Paris, where each order came to salute her to the sound of trumpets. Claude was in a litter of silver cloth, on a cushion of cloth of gold, having the crown upon her head, covered with precious stones, and a necklace of precious stones about her neck. . . . Next came the chevaliers of the Order, the princes of the blood, and M. le Sénéchal of Normandy. After came the King's mother, the duchesses and countesses.

"At the Saint-Denis Gate there was seen a scaffold above which there opened a cloud from which came forth a woman holding a gold ring representing the Queen. To right and left of the lady were six ladies out of the Old Testament.

"And at the foot of the said scaffold, four ladies named Justice, Magnanimity, Prudence, Temperance, representing four widows who rule in the realm of France, to wit Madame d'Angoulême, the King's mother, Madame d'Alençon, Madame de Bourbon, Madame de Vendôme.

"The progress continued through Paris decorated with tapestries, with addresses in every square. Lastly Notre Dame where the Te Deum was sung and speeches made.

"In the royal palace a banquet was served on a great marble table, covered with cloth of gold, upon which was gold and silver plate. At each course the trumpets and clarions sounded.

"On the following day there was a tournament led by the King and the Comte de Saint-Pol."

This first-hand authentic report, much shortened, by the way, shows the grandiose pageantry of a century in which the actors are the princes. They play in all high seriousness, and are absorbed in their attitudes, in their parts. The great simplicity of Louis XI, his mystical rather than decorative idea of royalty, are all forgotten. The excessive cost of these games was to make an ever-increasing breach in the monarchy, through which it was in time to perish. For the moment, what a marvellous thing was this life in all that shimmering of jewels, that riot of colour and sound. Those lovely fresh velvets, those crackling brocades, that royal ballet in its setting of real life, those beautiful specimens of humanity whose portraits Clouet and Dumoustier have bequeathed to us: women and men of superabundant vitality, all makes a resplendent spectacle, the echo of which delights us and

consoles us for our own puling days. There is Baternay, there is Bonnivet, there is Vendôme, there is Bourbon the most handsome, the most sumptuous of all in the arrogance of his proud device

Quicumque vergat sol primus ero.

"Wherever the sun sends his rays I shall be the first."

There is the regent, who is revelling in the triumph of her son, "her magnificent Caesar", already showing her ingratitude towards her aunt de Beaujeu, who had nevertheless made her fortune, cruel to the young queen whom she torments.

There is Anne of France, with all her prestige, watching over her son-in-law, whom the tigress of Savoy covets. There is Marguerite d'Alençon, poetic and tender, who will be the spirit of this court and its mystical flower. There are all the bright satellites of this already sunlike king, whose dizzy orbit is one dazzlement.

The Grant' Sénéchalle, in her charming youth, mingling with these pomps, is not yet their cynosure. She fulfils the duties of her posts, quietly, near the person of the effaced queen, whose court is in complete contradiction, in complete opposition to that of her husband. While François shamelessly established

the reign of free manners, with his mistresses, Claude of France, faithful to the tradition of her mother, Anne of Brittany, formed a clan apart, where everything was modesty, decency and even austerity. So much that an English girl, Anne de Boleyn, finding this life too monotonous, passed to the service of the Duchesse d'Alençon who was livelier and gayer. Surrounded by her train of good works, the queen spends her time in spinning, in making tapestry. The butt of her mother-in-law's hatred, she lives apart. The king visits her, gives her seven children, and some attentions, but no confidence, no consideration. It is Louise of Savoy who is to be regent. Effaced, ill, frail, pious and pure, the little queen whose emblem is a lily, whose motto is *Candidior candidis*, the whitest of things, will leave nothing of herself behind, nothing but her name given to a new plum in the Touraine orchards, the reine Claude—the greengage.

Diane is one of her household. She has its air and its tone. After the example of the court of Moulins where everything was dignified and great, it was that of the court of Amboise, or of Blois, where all is modest and gentle. So no one will speak ill of her. No one will even notice her otherwise than to do homage to her beauty. In the album of crayon sketches, *François I. chez Madame de Boisy*, beside each

woman's portrait is written by the king's own hand, they say, a legend that fixes the reputation of the original. For the Grant' Sénéchalle is written:

> Bele à la voyr honeste à la hanter
> (Good to look on, pleasant to be with)

Nowhere is there any question of a liaison with the king or with any one else. François was smitten with an infatuation for Françoise de Foix, the daughter of Gaston Phoebus, Comtesse de Chateaubriant, who reigned over his heart down to 1525.

Diane belongs to the queen. She is the wife of the Grant' Sénéchal. Undoubtedly she loved her husband with a deep affection. Her fidelity to his memory is a guarantee of her feelings for him. He must have adored this young woman of the great soul who enchanted his old age. We have a letter from him at this period that sheds a light on their real private life. It is addressed to the son of the Maréchal de Montmorency, who was Constable at a later period, at the moment when Diane was about to be brought to bed, of her second daughter no doubt. This letter indicates the good understanding of the couple, their favour with the king, the obvious absurdity of an intrigue that had it existed would have made plenty of noise in its own time, and that was not even invented till twenty-five years later.

Monsieur de la Roche-Pot,

I have had two pairs of letters from you since your departure, by which I assure you that you have done me as great pleasure as you could ever have done me, for two reasons; one for the great desire I had to have news of you, and to know that you were well; and the other for that I knew that you have not forgotten me, and in that I have not written to you, Monsieur de la Roche, I beg you to hold me excused, for the cause that kept me from it is that I have not budged from here, with the lady of the house, save fifteen days, since the king came hither; when I assure you that we made him great cheer, for there were many demoiselles of all sorts and conditions, and beautiful; but as it would all be very long to write to you, I leave it to you to imagine how it was. We went to Rouen, where we were well entertained, and thence to Mauny where we took a great stag, and thence to le Hâvre de Grace, where the said lord slept and saw his great ship. On the morrow we set out to return to Brittany where we took another great stag, the very one with the fine head, whose antlers I showed every year to the king; whence we returned to Rouen, where we were three or four days making the best cheer in the world; and every day feasts and banquets to the ladies, and I promise you that we were as well treated as in any place ever we were in. The said lord went thence straight to Saint-Germain and I came here to see the lady of the house, and her belly is so great that I hope she will not carry for much longer.

(Here details about his stock)

The lady of the house commends her to your good grace, whose belly is so great that I think she will not carry it

hardly longer, for she is in her ninth month, and says that the first news you have of her will be that her figure will be handsomer than it is at this hour, which will be the end, praying God, Monsieur de la Roche, to give you all you desire.

At Ennet, January 1518.
From your friends, and most to your command

BRÉZÉ.

§ §

Barely was she delivered when she went back to Amboise, where the court was still given over to rejoicing. Madeleine de La Tour d'Auvergne was marrying the Duke of Urbino, Lorenzo de Medici. The whole nobility of France was gathered together. Its function and duty was to make war or to feast, but whether in warring or in feasting to despoil itself for the greater glory of the reign.

As always the feasts were splendid, and went on for ten days. The court of the château was turned into a tent, covered with magnificent stuffs, for the banquets, each dish being served to the sound of fanfares. The nights were lit up for balls. Seventy-two young women formed quadrilles by twelves, in different costumes: some in Italian, others in German dress, and danced to the sound of tambourines. The days were adorned with military pageants. Out in the

fields a wooden fort had been erected, and the Duc d'Alençon fought against the Duc de Bourbon.

Now this Madeleine de La Tour was a relative of Diane through her mother, and from this marriage came Catherine, who was later to be Queen of France. But who can divine the far off repercussion of chance events, arising without our recognizing the signs. Diane dances while her destiny is shaping itself on the horizon.

In those days Leonardo da Vinci was the orderer of the royal entertainments. Behind the ridge that divides the valley of the Amasse from that of the Loire, the Manor of Clou, built by Étienne Le Loup, of brick and stone, has access to the Château by a slope. There dwelt the marvellous old man who had come to know François I after the battle of Marignan, and consented to come and end his days in the city of the Loire, with the soft hues of Tuscany. Here he painted the Forerunner and that smiling Pomona of the threefold veil the loss of which must be for ever regretted. Leonardo organized the fêtes, watched the birds flying and the women smiling. Is that portrait of Diane in her first beauty really by him? A habitual guest at the court, he must have taken delight in fixing on the canvas this young woman still a supernumerary in this fairy spectacle in which she was to take the leading part, and a soothsayer as well as an artist, if he set

down these words in his notebook, the Grant' Sénéchalle must have pondered their prophetic range.

"The bird creates the current on which it goes forward, it flies on the vortex itself has made."

§ §

But before it takes first flight, what god provides the wake along which it will sweep with all the vigour of its wings? In this year, pregnant with the future, is consummated the marriage from which there will be born the rival wife against whom the favourite's destiny will be shipwrecked. A child is coming who will fulfil that destiny through love.

The second son of François I was born on the last day of March, 1518. By this letter sent to all the good towns of France, on the day of the queen's delivery, the King proclaims the good news and invites his loyal subects to rejoicing.

De par le Roy.

Very dear and well-beloved. It hath pleased God our creator to do us this grace to give us once more a noble son, of which our very dear and beloved companion the Queen is this day delivered; whereof, as our good and loyal subjects who we know will have pleasure thereof, we have desired to inform you and write to the archbishops and bishops of our kingdom to hold processions that will be held in our city of Tours, we request and enjoin upon you to

be with and to assist the clergy to do your duty; for it is a thing that with the aid of God, will be of service to the good of the realm, and its subjects. Which doing ye will do service very agreeable. Given at Saint Germain en Laye, the last day of March.

François Hedoyn.

(Addressed to our very dear and well-beloved, the burgesses, good people and dwellers in our good town and city of Tours.)

Thus was announced the coming into the world of Henri, Duc d'Orleans, later Henri II. Diane was eighteen years and three months old. Was she with Queen Claude at that moment? Did she lean over the cradle with never an inkling that the first murmurs of the new-born babe contained the love words of a marvellous lover, whose life would be wholly dedicated to her? He was only the second son. Could she guess that a King was born, and that those swaddlings concealed the purple, that the little square cap hid a crown? All possibilities are at every moment to be expected, to be feared, to be hoped. Many a time and oft circumstances that have passed unnoticed take their revenge for the indifference they met with by the terrible or marvellous surprises to which they give birth. The Grant' Sénéchalle belongs only to her husband, to her daughters, to the queen. She foresees nothing. Her strength, like that of all those who are predestinate, will lie, not in dreaming of impossible strokes of luck

and exhausting themselves in barren desires, but in seizing as they appear events suitable for her advantage.

As in the old allegories, above the infant's cradle two cupids, looking like twin angels, hold a golden cartouche on which are carven two letters entwined, in closest marriage, the H and D of legend.

§ §

1520.—Without taking thought for a life that seems fixed and established, Diane follows the current of her age. The culminating point of her years so rich in fêtes is that which has remained in all memories under the name of "the Field of the Cloth of Gold."

Everyone knows how between Ardres and Guines François I, to receive and to win the King of England, for whose alliance Charles V was his competitor, erected a pavilion of sixty feet square. The outside was of cloth of gold, and the inside lined with blue velvet adorned with fleurs de lis and gold embroideries from Cyprus. At the four corners of the field four pavilions of similar costliness were erected likewise. On May 3, 1520, the King set out from Montreuil with his wife, his mother and the ladies of the court, to meet his guest. Henry VIII and Catharine of Aragon crossed the channel on May 1. On June 7, the two kings met, with Wolsey and Bonnivet. On the tenth the banquet was held. On the eleventh were the

jousts before the assembled lords and ladies. François won Henry's good graces by his confidence and his cordiality, going without escort to surprise him at his awakening. But wrestling with him hand to hand, in sport, he threw him to the ground, which nettled the King of England and spoiled the good effect of the meeting. They were rivals as men even more than as monarchs, for they each pretended to the advantage in strength and good looks.

"His Majesty," said the Venetian envoy of Henry VIII, "is twenty-nine years of age. He is of very goodly aspect, nature could not have done more for the King, he is the handsomest sovereign in Christendom, far handsomer than the King of France, very fair and built in the most perfect proportions. When he heard that King François had a fair beard, he wished to have his the same, and as it was naturally red the result is a beard near the colour of gold . . . I must say that he is the best dressed sovereign in the world. His clothes are as rich and superb as it is possible to imagine and there is no day of fête on which he does not put on new ones. He is skilled in all bodily exercises, he composes music and he has done his humanities. He speaks French, English, and Latin. But he allows himself to be too much engrossed in love-making."

Of François I the Venetian envoy notes at the same time:

LIBRARY OF MOUNT SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE

"The King is handsome, brown rather than otherwise, very tall, broad of shoulder and chest, and so keen and courageous that I assure your lordships that I have seen him enter the lists at the wedding of the princess of Navarre, in the greatest heat I have known in France, arrayed and as easy as any knight in the world. His face long and full, only he is a trifle short of sight. He dresses magnificently. A man insensible to fatigue, he hunts the stag and the ladies."

What a contrast they are to the man whose concentrated and formidable power held these two rival paraders in check, the man in black, of the aquiline nose, the metallic eyes, the lower jaw jutting out over too long teeth, and consequently lying open: Charles V, Emperor of the Two Worlds. . . . He followed amusedly this useless pageantry. The huge sums flung away on this field of gold, to appear at which the lords had mortgaged their lands. He employed his finances to organize his army, and already he had seen that the sombre mien of the Constable concealed a pride that might well be to his profit.

The Grant' Sénéchalle was still but one of the 'supers' of this grandiose spectacle. One of the ladies for whom tournaments were given. Let us merely remember that, witnessing these fêtes, she will always retain the taste for such splendours, and that her life, set to this rhythm, henceforth could neither diminish

nor slow down. But still there is nothing said or insinuated about her behaviour, which is always beyond reproach. No one can observe greater attention to her on the part of the King, or of anyone among the lords who are her husband's friends. She lives on familiar terms with François, like all the ladies of the court. It is the Sénéchal himself who in a letter dated from Blois on February 2, 1521, speaks playfully of this harmless intimacy.

"The King sups with a small company at Madame l'amyrale's (Louise de Crèvecoeur) and in my room, where we must make fritters after dinner."

He is a great child at play who must have women near him.

"A court without ladies, 'tis like springtime without flowers," he will say. Madame de Chateaubriant continues to have all his favour. If he amuses himself by the way with some easy bourgeoise, or some peasant lass encountered in the course of a hunt, the fact is known and taken as of no importance. But Madame de Brézé is never named. Thus the verses found engraved on a chimneypiece at Loury in the Orléanais, are apochryphal and the malicious work of some libellous jester on a rainy evening.

> Dans ce pourpris, le grand François Premier
> Trouva toujours jouissance nouvelle

Qu'il est heureux ce lieu qui seul recèle
Fleur de Beauté, Diane de Poitiers.

Diane was not even an adventure by the way for his High Fickleness. Too conspicuous, the whole court would have chattered of it. The Grant' Sénéchalle loved her husband and her children, she lived in honour a youth untouched by scandal. Yet the time was drawing nigh when she was to undergo the trial out of which history was to draw the absurdest of legends. We shall follow its phases and by the help of authentic documents dispose finally of a theory to which nothing but ignorance could have lent belief.

§ §

If the outward semblance of the reign was glorious and magnificent, difficulties innumerable rose up before the King, who refused to see them. Between his frivolities and his mother's rapacity, the kingdom was moving to imminent bankruptcy. The misconduct of the prince, the bad administration, or rather the total lack of administration of the finances, began to create discontents and provoke murmurs. The people took its revenge in pamphlets. Farces were played before tragedies. The Abbé Cruche composed one in which François I was represented as the lover of a city lass, daughter of a councillor to the parliament, whose

property he seized. Already in 1516 there had been imprisoned Jacques le Bazochien, Jehan Seroc and Maître Jehan de Pontalez, who staged a farce in Paris in which it was said that Mother Stupid (Louise de Valois) governed the court, robbed, pillaged and embezzled. So exhausted was the treasury by the insensate luxury of the King, his mother's greed, the wars, and a policy devoid of all prudence, that in 1522, François I had to lay hands on the great silver trellis of the church of Saint-Martin of Tours, the gift of Louis XI. Three weeks later he sent to take four apostles of gold, relics of the episcopal church of Laon in Picardy.

On August 18, he comes to Paris to borrow money from the small people, merchants and notaries, and establish the tax of the *cloven hoof*, in other words a tax on the entrance of animals with cloven hoofs. In the same year another private loan, from people of high position, partly in specie and partly in plate. From the men of the Church he three times levied a tithe on all benefices. The inventive mind of the Chancellor Duprat, whose imagination was to go a very long way, was continually finding out fresh expedients.

The soldiers of Italy were not paid. The Constable had advanced considerable sums, the Comte de Saint-Vallier had lent 100,000 crowns, which he was now asking to have repaid. The King had 400,000 crowns sent to Lautrec, who had remained in the Milanais.

But on the way they strayed into the hands of Louise of Savoy.

1521.—The year 1521 opened, which like 1518 was to bring Diane an essential date on the dial of her destiny. The Queen was delivered at Saint-Germain of a third son named Charles. At Moulins in the Bourbonnais there were held the unforgettable fêtes for the baptism of the son of Charles and Suzanne de Bourbon. The whole court was there. The Grant' Sénéchalle went too, which was to have most important consequences for her and for the kingdom. The Constable was imprudent enough to display his too great power. The King was jealous, his mother envious, and both of them from that moment planned to seize it for themselves, which would settle matters very well. Diane saw once again the haunts of her childhood, and better understood her preceptress's lessons of the energy and greatness necessary to all who desired, not merely to rise, but to hold their place. Soon there died the babe, little more than born, for whom these fêtes were given. And soon his mother, fragile and ailing, died too. Charles de Bourbon remained free and without an heir. Had he the right to keep the property that came to him from his wife? Anne of France had foreseen everything, and by two royal decrees, one from Charles VIII, her brother, one

Photograph by Giraudon

CHARLES DE BOURBON, CONSTABLE OF FRANCE, WHO DREW SAINT-VALLIER INTO HIS TREASON

École de Clouet, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes

from Louis XII, her cousin, she had secured to her well-beloved son-in-law the property she had so skilfully amassed. Louise of Savoy troubled little about the question of legality. She loved money, she loved the Duke, she wanted to take possession of them without other form, and put before the Constable the ultimatum: either to marry her or hand over to her his wife's inheritance, for she was the daughter of Marguerite de Bourbon, Pierre's sister, and the only direct descendant of the house. The Constable refused in sharp terms, strong in the support of Anne, strong in the royal decrees. Unfortunately Anne died, and the decrees were annulled. The struggle was waged without mercy. Charles had his pensions withdrawn, his properties were seized, he was reduced to despair: "Victory or death", he exclaimed as he left Chantelle, and there he was, gone over to the service of the Emperor, who was on the look-out for his treachery.

§ §

1523.—Now the Comte de Saint-Vallier, his ally and his kinsman, had remained faithful to him. He too was cheated of the crowns he had lent, of his counties withheld, that they would not give back to him. Seeing his friend's distress, he swore on the relics of the Cross to serve him. He was present at the inter-

view between Charles and Beaurain, the Emperor's envoy. For a moment he tried to turn the rebel from his dangerous resolve. The Duke was inflexible. Then, at this last moment, Bourbon and Saint-Vallier embraced one another and wept. The great soldier who had commanded at Agnadel and been the real victor at Marignan turned against France, because of the insensate love of Louise of Savoy, because of the chaotic finances of François I. The treason was complete. Immediately upon the King's departure for Italy, the gates of the kingdom were to be opened, on the east to the troops of Charles V; on the north to those of Henry VIII. And now a strange thing happened. For the success of this irruption of the English through Normandy complicity was needed in the strongholds. Two gentlemen of Normandy were sounded and bought. Seized with remorse, and scenting some misfortune for themselves, the pair went to consult a priest, who went off incontinently to find the Sénéchal at Conflans. Without any idea that his father-in-law was mixed up with the plot, Brézé wrote to the King. It was Louise of Savoy, then at Cléry, between Beaugency and Blois, who received the letter, and forwarded it on to her son in all haste. At once the Maréchal de Chabannes was dispatched to arrest the culprits. Bourbon had time to escape, his accomplices

were taken. Saint-Vallier was brought under strong guard to Lyons, and then to Loches.

§ §

It was indeed a heavy blow for the Grant' Sénéchalle and her husband when they learned the plight of the Constable, their friend, their protector who had made their marriage, and of Saint-Vallier. Diane found herself in a strange position. Her father was a traitor to the King, but her husband, by denouncing the plot, had saved the throne. Had she been a woman of heroic gestures and pathetic phrase, she might have tempted Corneille later. Weak, suppliant, verbose, she might have attracted Racine. But Diane, worthy of her name, her race, her training, neither complains nor grows dramatic. Mistress of herself, she must remain mistress of events. With her husband, she must think long and act promptly. It must not be that her family should be diminished, its possessions lessened, its name, that ancient name of which she was so proud, tarnished. She had a double game to play. She had to implore pity for her father, to levy gratitude for her husband. Queen Claude loved her, the King loved Brézé. She stayed in Normandy, waiting, and receiving from the prisoner woeful letters to which she could not reply.

Madame la Grant' Sénéchalle, Since I wrote you last, am arrived at the Château de Loches, as evil-entreated as poor prisoner could be, and if God aids me not, thence I shall not budge for long time, and inasmuch as all my hope is in your husband and in you, I beg him to kindly come and talk with me, if this is not possible for him, I beg you to kindly come, you could not do me greater pleasure, to come and see me, and together you and I will decide what you ought to say to Madame, and when you are in her presence, you will be able to ask leave from her to come and see me. I require of you, having so much pity of your poor father, as to kindly come to see him, and if it is possible to you, bring M. de Lisieux to whom I commend me, and to his good grace. My heart breaks that I can send you nought else save that I pray God he give you your desire.

At Loches this nineteenth of September.

Your good father

POITIERS.

To his son-in-law he wrote:

Monsieur my son, I think you are sufficiently acknown of my estate, that the King hath had me taken for no cause, I swear it upon my soul's damnation, whereas the Constable hath gone, and hath had me brought hither to the Château of Loches, as a false traitor, which to me is so very horrible grief that I die of it. I pray God that he will grant me good patience, and to the King knowledge of the shame he does me. Since he so pleaseth, reason will have me take patience; and sith you are the person in the world that I love the most, and in whom I have most confidence, I have desired to let you know of my wretched state, to the end that you may

have pity of me, and may desire to bring me from the plight in which I am, and if it were possible, to be able to come and speak with me, that you and I we might contrive what should be done. I am afeard you may not be able to come hither, if you cannot, I require of you, for God's honour, that you will kindly send your wife, she will be able to go to Blois and ask Madame for leave to come and see me, without telling her aught, and she and I we will devise what she shall say to Madame; and likewise do you on your side write to the King and to Madame, on my affair, as you well know how, and I require of you make M. Lisieux come. My heart is so wrung that it kills me, for that I know that I must ask you. I beseech you have pity on me. They tell me that the confiscation of my goods to the King is demanded; you shall take thought for this, for it touches you, they are our good friends. I beseech you, make haste to let me hear of you. I pray God, monsieur my son, to give you your desire.

At Loches, the ninteenth of September.

Did she come to Loches to see her father? It is far from likely. It was necessary that she should seem to let the King's justice take its course, the better to take it secretly, unawares. The best thing, in her false position, was to say nothing and let her husband act for her. This attitude was more in her fashion. She must wait and watch.

The prisoner, utterly cast down, made a poor defence. Having at the outset denied his complicity with Bourbon, he speedily entered on the path of confes-

sions. Then he retracted, to sink into despair and fever. His hair did not turn white in a single night, as men have said, but during the long months of his captivity.

France was panting in the toils. On the East 12,000 lansquenets had entered Champagne, 25,000 Spaniards in the south were moving on Bayonne, 35,000 English and Netherlanders had invaded Picardy. Evidently the King must needs make an example, and revenge himself on the guilty ones in his hands for the chief culprit who had escaped and who was directing the war. The prosecution was held in haste. On Christmas Eve, 1523, there was brought to the Conciergerie in Paris, from Loches, Messire Jehan de Poitiers, Chevalier of the Order, the Bishop of Puy in Auvergne, brother of M. de la Palisse (brother-in-law to Saint-Vallier) the Grand Master of France, Papillon, the Chancellor of the Bourbonnais. They were all condemned to be beheaded and to lose property, honours and dignities. What is to be said? Did Diane and Brézé do nothing? Letters from the Grant' Sénéchal reassure us on this point, and are proof positive that he alone intervened in the matter, the consequences of which were of such great importance to him and his.

To Monsieur le Grant Maître (René of Savoy the bastard brother of the queen regent.)

I have not written you, but it may please you to give ear to my excuses, of which the chief was the adversity and ill-

fortune befalling certain of my friends, as you will understand sufficiently that it is a thing that hath more grieved my heart than any other, that ever happened me and since my coming to this court, it hath taken from me the memory of all others, for you know that in such tribulation a man is bound to help them to the extent of his power, furthermore that the matter touches me, and I assure you Monseigneur, mon mareschal, that without the kindness and graciousness of the master I were one of the most unhappy gentlemen in this world, but the hope I have of the knowledge he has of his good servants hath lightened me of the greatest part of the anxiety I bore for it. What also hindered me from writing to you, I being in Normandy, was that I was sure that what the King knew of it you were always informed of, which will be the end of these presents, to tell you that the said lord hath done me much honour and good cheer more than longeth to a man of my estate, for he has had me always called to the council and to the dispatch of his affairs.

From Blois the xth of January 1524.

BRÉZÉ.

To the Maréchal de Montmorency.

. . . . . .

All the news I could write to you is that the King still holds purpose to go to Paris, and thence into Picardy, and to return by way of Rouen and Mauny, where he hath made me as good a tower as it is possible to make, he has sent to the said Mauny five butts of wine, ten of white and *germelles*, and fifteen of Beaune.

From Bloys the xxth January 1524.

To the same:

If you desire to know Monsieur mon mareschal, how I stand, I assure you that *I have been forced to speak myself*, for I have found no one who helped me, yet have I so good trust in the goodness of the master that I hope all will go well.

From Bloys 1524.

Thus while the prisoner was languishing in prison, the King was sending gifts of wine to the Sénéchal and showing him his good graces? Brézé was right to hope, but he did better to speak and to act for himself.

The affair ran its course. On February 17, 1524, Duprat pronounced the sentence. The Comte de Boissy went to the Conciergerie to divest Saint-Vallier of the collar of the Order of the King, and to strip him of his office as captain of a hundred gentlemen. At two in the afternoon the notary Malon, assisted by his colleague Jean de Vignolles, escorted by eight ushers of the court came and read the sentence to the culprit. This reading left him calm and resigned. The moral and physical sufferings he had endured at Loches had broken his spirit. He had nothing to look forward to but death. So he dictated his last wishes, then remained closeted with his confessor, the curé Merlin, with whom he conversed for about an hour. At three o'clock the procession set out, Saint-Vallier being bareheaded, his hands tied behind his back, clad in a coarse woollen

gown trimmed with fox fur. He was hoisted on to a horse, and an archer on the crupper held him up. The executioner held the horse's bridle, on one side was the *lieutenant criminel*, on the other the curé Merlin, riding a mule. They went slowly on to the Place de Grève. There the victim was seized and carried on to the platform; he was stripped to doublet and hose, and made to kneel that he might "ask pardon from God and the law". The huge crowd that had come to see the execution were murmuring. The regent and Duprat were not popular, and great numbers still held to the Constable's party. The parliament and the nobility were on his side; his bravery and his good looks made him popular. Time slipped by, and the wretched man was still waiting for his death. It was obvious that there was some abnormal delay, which went on for an hour. Then arrived an archer covered with dust, crying, "Holà, hold, hold, here is the King's reprieve". Michel Dollet read the royal script in a loud voice, while Saint-Vallier gave himself up to manifestations of immoderate joy, laughing, weeping, crossing himself. He was taken back breathless to his prison, and once more brought to Loches, where his daughters had permission to come and see him.

This pardon of François, read aloud before the assembled people, entered in the registers of the Par-

liament, leaves no doubt as to what had procured it. With the letters of the Sénéchal, quoted above, they ought to have made things clear to those historians who were more seriously concerned with the truth, and whose only trouble was to look for it. That any doubt should have hovered over this affair shows the power of mere popular opinion triumphing over the documents themselves, and leaves us pondering over human justice.

The King's Pardon:

François, by the grace of God King of France, to all men present and to come, Greeting. As for some time past Our dear and faithful cousin, councillor and chamberlain, the Comte de Maulevrier, Grant Sénéchal of Normandy, and the kinsmen and friends in the flesh of Jehan de Poitiers, sieur de Saint-Vallier, having in very great humility entreated and besought Us to have pity and compassion on the said Poictiers, and in favour and consideration of them, and of the services by them done to the Kings Our predecessors, to Us and to Our realm, since Our coming to the crown, and in like manner, whereas of late the said Grant Sénéchal, which showing the fidelity and loyalty he hath to Us and to Our realm, has unfolded to Us the machinations and conspiracies against Our person, Our children and Our said realm, and in so doing hath preserved Us from the evils that might have therefrom ensued, be it Our pleasure to commute and change the penalty of death to which the said Poictiers may have been or might be hereafter, by decree of Our court of Parliament, condemned as guilty

of treason, to another penalty, We do all to wit that having regard to these things and consideration to the said services and chiefly to that which the said Grant Sénéchal hath done to Us, as hath been said: the said penalty of death We have of Our certain knowledge, special grace, full power, and royal authority, commuted and do commute to the penalty hereinafter set forth, that is to say, that the same Poictiers shall be placed and shut up perpetually within four walls of stone masoned within and without, wherein shall be but one small opening through which shall be administered to him his drink and his meat. Furthermore remaining the substance of the decree of the said court against him given or to be given, in all other things, in full force and virtue, and in all and at all points wholly executed. Thus We enjoin upon Our beloved and worthy councillors, Our people holding Our said Court of Parliament, that the said commutation thus made by Us, as is said, and the whole contents of these presents, they maintain keep and observe without doing to the contrary in any fashion whatsoever. Furthermore putting or causing to be put into full and entire execution the rest of the said decree, for such is Our pleasure, and that this may be firm and established for ever we have signed these presents with Our own hand, and to them have had Our seal set, saving in other things Our right and the rights of others.

Given at Blois in the month of February, in the year of grace one thousand five hundred and twenty-three, (1524) and the tenth of our reign, thus signed under the fold François.

Par le roy Robertet and sealed with green wax and silk ribbons.

This authentic document is sufficiently clear. But when truth interferes with the passions, it is thrust aside, in the certainty that no one will go to look for it, for men are much more prone to believe evil than good. Round this pardon of Saint-Vallier's the Protestants manufactured the well-known legend that Diane gave the King her virginity (*sic*) to obtain her father's life. Virginity is going rather far for a woman married eight or nine years and a mother of two girls. It was Régnier de la Planche, a Huguenot writer, who brought the earliest accusation in *De l'Estat de la France sous François I^er^*. "In her youth," he says, "Diane ransoms with her maidenhead the life of the Sieur de Saint-Vallier her father".

Brantôme says nothing about maidenhead, but he quotes words of the condemned man as he came down from the scaffold, somewhat curiously.

"I have heard tell of a great noble, who having been condemned to have his head cut off, that being already on the scaffold his pardon arrived, which his daughter, who was very beautiful, had procured, and coming down from the scaffold he said no other thing but 'God save the sweet . . . of my daughter which hath saved me so well.'"

Mezeray who is incredibly rabid against the Sénéchalle, accepts all these calumnies with his eyes shut. Sauval repeats them after him. Ludovic Lalanne, in

the *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris*, revels in them. Michelet and Henri Martin take care not to leave out a single one of these spicy details. Hugo put the last touch on the absurd legend, and gave it gospel currency in *le Roi s'amuse*.

> Vous François de Valois, le soir du même jour
> (*Saint-Vallier is speaking*)
> Sans crainte, sans pitié, sans pudeur, sans amour,
> Dans votre lit, tombeau de la vertu des femmes,
> Vous avez froidement, sous vos baisers infâmes
> Terni, flétri, souillé, déshonoré, brisé
> Diane de Poitiers, comtesse de Brézé.

And there is the story. And there is what reputations hang upon. Upon a deliberate and calculated calumny light writers build their tales, which from age to age grow in solidity. A few, with weak voices, tried to tell the truth. Arnould le Ferron was one, Belleforest too, who born in 1530 and living in the house of the Queen of Navarre, set down in his annals these lines, which though still very inaccurate were nearer the truth.

> There was no thing that so much moved the King as the tears and prayers of Diane de Poitiers, the only [*no*] daughter of this Seigneur de Saint-Vallier, who having been appointed to the service, both of the Queen mother of the King and of Queen Claude, did so well that the King granted grace for the father to the daughter, who was ready to follow the same road as he, had he been undone by the law.

How psychologically and judicially untrue all this is. And lamentable, when the documents are there, within the reach of anyone who cares to read them. A few persons even without looking for them hold by simple logic and defend the Grant' Sénéchalle, like Dreux du Radier, Gaillard, Michaud, Pasquier, Niel, Sainte-Beuve, but it is simpler to publish these letters of Brézé and the royal pardon in all its eloquent verity. Saint-Vallier's execution had been got up to impress the people. His pardon, determined upon from the very first, was due not to Diane but above all to Brézé, who had discovered Bourbon's plot and saved the King, who owed him a reward.

As for that famous Saint-Vallier fever, which passed into a proverb, and which they said came upon him while he was awaiting execution, it was simply malaria, which he had contracted in Italy at the time of the battle of Marignan ten years before.

§ §

So here is Diane escaped from that evil pass. With her husband, she had saved her father's life; it still remained for her to recover his property, which was kept by the King, and this, considering the state of the public finances, was more difficult than the other. For this whole business of treason was caused by the

penury of the royal Treasury and the Regent's greed. The biggest creditor, Bourbon, was obviously ruined; he was owed too much. And besides, he was alone to fight his case. But Saint-Vallier had at his back his powerful son-in-law and his patient daughter, who was to become yet more powerful. Freed from anxiety for her father, she was living in Normandy, letting the dark waves of calamity pass over her house and the realm.

Everything was changing about her, no longer was it the time of feasts and pageantries. Her protectress, Anne de Beaujeu, died on the threshold of her ruined house.

And here is Queen Claude in her time, dying quietly as she had lived, a drooping lily, neglected and pure. They said she had contracted a shameful malady from her husband. She was the daughter of lame Anne of Brittany and the worn-out Louis XII, which was enough to make her health precarious.

"On the XXVth day of the month of July 1524, about one o'clock of the afternoon, of this age deceased the pearl of ladies, and clear mirror of goodness without stain, Madame Claude, queen of France, daughter of the late King Loys XIIth of that name, who was deeply regretted."

The royal children were left orphans, and entrusted to the care of the ladies and of their grandmother.

Much neglected in truth, for the kingdom was in great peril. Charles de Bourbon pursued his revenge, at the head of the Emperor's armies he went after his adversary with desperate energy. "Victory or death" he had said as he left Chantelle, the fair château of his happiness. It was victory that smiled on him. In the field of Pavia he held François at his mercy at last, and made him in his turn give up his sword, as he had done himself with less dishonour. The King was a prisoner. Louise of Savoy was Regent.

"By reason of her sense, virtues, prudence, integrity to rule and administer until the King shall be returned."

It is to this moment the enemies of the Grant' Sénéchalle assign this letter they say François wrote to her from Spain:

After losing, so as to have you, all the weal I could have without you, if I lost you, be sure that I would seek no other remedy than to destroy myself, for I should ever deem better death without memory than memory without death.

Your unfortunate friend

FRANÇOIS.

And Diana, they say, replied:

The hand whose whole body is yours.

Another proof of their liaison, say the shallow historians. Now it is proved that this letter from the

King, sufficiently mysterious, is addressed to Madame de Chateaubriant, and the answer is in the lady's handwriting. At that period Diane was at Anet with her husband, as this letter from Brézé further bears witness.

Monsieur le grant maître,

. . . . . .

The lady of the house hath prayed me to commend her to your good grace.

Annet, Saturday XIX September 1524.

1525.—She must needs stay in Normandy during the whole of this period, so critical for France, which nevertheless in no way harmed her official position. Indeed, while François, a prisoner in Madrid, moped himself sick, while Saint-Vallier remained at Loches, waiting for his friend the Constable to win a victory that would set him free, we follow in the deliberations of the municipality of Rouen the life of the Sénéchal and his wife, which still expands in power and becomes established in security.

"Friday, March 10, the Grant' Sénéchal accompanied by the bishops of Lisieux and Évreux, the Sieurs Des Cleres and the Sieur de Tury and the Sieur de Rouville, comes to announce the taking of the King on the day of Pavia."

On March 18, the city asks the Sénéchal to have the

castle, the old palace and Saint-Catherine's Mount repaired at the King's charges.

"On April 23, after Easter, it is announced that the Grant' Sénéchal, the King's Lieutenant in Normandy, had judged it good and fitting for the weal, honour and preservation of the city that a muster be made in good order with standards, fifes and drums and with no torn or perished silk upon the harness."

On July 5, before the Bailiff of Rouen were read letters from the King appointing the Comte de Maulevrier, Grant' Sénéchal of Normandy, to be Governor of Normandy, the post falling vacant by the death of the Duc d'Alençon (at Pavia).

On September 24, letters read from the King for the entry of the Grant' Sénéchal as Governor of Normandy.

"On September 23, on the occasion of the entry of this personage, the Bailiff shall make the address, the present shall be 50 marks silver, Monsr Gombault shall make the second address, the canopy shall be of satin or of damask and shall be borne by the four *quarteniers*. The streets shall be hung. September 26. It shall be required of the Sieur Grant' Sénéchal, after reverence done him, in all humility, that his pleasure shall be to guard the privileges of the city as well as of the country. Also that justice be maintained and kept, and that punishment be inflicted upon the men

of war who every day devour the poor people in the villages. September 27. Entry of the Grant' Sénéchal, accompanied by the Bishops of Lisieux, Évreux, Angoulême, and the Abbé de Bernay, received by the Archbishop, supper at the prelate's mansion, and to the castle to sleep. The penultimate day of September. Presents offered to the Governor. Two dishes, two great ewers and two gilt flagons with his arms."

It is curious enough to see this rising of the Brézés at the moment when the whole kingdom was suffering through the treason of Bourbon and his band. From Madrid the King takes thought to provide for his servant. Does it mean that feeling himself vanquished, he seeks to group about his frail crown the friends that are worthy to serve it? Diane, without any crooked policy, profits by a position that ought to have been unfavourable to her. Here she is, wife of the Governor of Normandy, here she is, in especial, on the eve of recovering her detained property, that of her father, which must come to her by inheritance, without her having to make any move.

1526.—In Madrid there was with much travail being worked out the treaty signed on January 14, 1526. Besides the political clauses, it contained paragraphs that must have made the Brézés rejoice. The Constable had worked well for them:

"Monsieur de Bourbon and his accomplices, condemned for rebellion, recover their confiscated properties.

"Reinstatement of the honour of Monseigneur de Bourbon aforesaid, which hath been trampled upon in France and elsewhere by insults of defamations, cries and public banishments, etc.

"Restitution of all properties.

"Likewise Monseigneur de Bourbon aforesaid demands that all his friends, adherents and servants shall be included and named in the treaty, and have reparation of losses and interests of mansions or châteaux.

"Also that the County of Valentinois and Diois, belonging as rightful successor and heir of the late Messire Aymar de Poitiers his predecessor, be given back and restored to him with the rights and tithes thereto appertaining and the revenues that have been raised therefrom the while this county has been sequestrated from him, and usurped, up to this present day."

The great heart of Charles de Montpensier appears once again in these lines. What he wished, and paid so high a price for, was that justice might be done to him and to all. The royal spoliations, debts unpaid to his servants, these were the sole causes of this merciless war. The conquering Bourbon forgot no one, he

thought of the prisoner at Loches who owed his life merely to a stroke of chance.

But it is curious to note how luck favours certain individuals. This affair, in which the honour and the fortune of the Grant' Sénéchalle might well have foundered, was the occasion of her triumph. For more than a century the Poitiers had been claiming these "unjustly withheld counties" from the King. It took this violent affair to have them restored to them. Let us observe here that this restitution was the result of Bourbon's victory, and that Diana did not obtain it through her charms, as the writers have gone on saying, continuing the series of lies that surround her memory. And there is the end of the second part of the absurd legend, so degrading for the woman who is its theme.

Diane did not give her virginity in exchange for her father's life. It was the service unwittingly rendered by Brézé that procured that favour from the King.

It was the victorious sword of Bourbon that procured for Diane the recovery of her family's property, unjustly withheld since the time of Charles VII.

The Treaty of Madrid also stipulated for the deliverance of François, in exchange for whom hostages were handed over to Spain. These hostages were in the first place to have been certain great nobles, who

offered themselves of their own free will for the exchange. Among them figures the name of Louis de Brézé. After many negotiations the nobles were refused, and the Emperor insisted that the royal children, François and Henri, should be handed over. And it was decided that the King should marry Eleanor, the sister of Charles V, who at first had been promised to Charles de Bourbon.

Saint-Vallier was able to come out of prison light of heart. Thenceforth he lived away from the court in his lands in Dauphiné. At fifty-seven, a widower for the second time, he married once more, Françoise de Polignac, and dropped into oblivion.

§ §

The Grant' Sénéchalle emerged victorious from this sharp skirmish. She got from it a greater greatness, as well as an experience in human affairs from which she would know how to profit. The business of the Constable, the little reliance to be placed on the royal word, even on duly registered decrees, put her on her guard for the future. The great wisdom and the sedulous prudence of Anne of France had not saved her from the ruin of her house. So to words or decrees must be added another force, the force that shatters all: the power of love the conqueror of all laws. She would remember.

Displaying no more joy in her victory than she had shown uneasiness in danger, she resumed her life at court, dissembling her thoughts, smiling and secret. Here she is at Bayonne with Louise of Savoy, where on the raft on the Bidassoa took place the exchange of the two little princes against their father, more fortunate than he deserved. The Dauphin François was nine years old, Henri d'Orléans was seven. Madame de Brissac and Louis de Ronsard, the poet's father, accompanied the two little orphans who departed in exile to the enemy Spain, the pledges of their father's brittle word. François I, given over to his delight at his deliverance, paid no heed to their distress, he had eyes for nothing but one of his mother's attendant ladies, the very lovely and very blonde Anne de Pisseleu, who captured his heart at first sight.

At that moment Henri, a "pensive" child and tender-hearted, looked about him for a man or a woman on whom he might lean in his weakness. It was the Grant' Sénéchalle who opened her mother arms to him. Weeping he nestled on her heart, and she kissed his forehead. From that moment to the little prince the lovely face of Diane was the face of his own fatherland from which he was exiled.

§ §

1527.—Hardly was he outside the boundaries of Spain, when François cast off all his engagements. Betrayed by France and Austria, disappointed in his very victory, Charles de Bourbon had now no prospect to his life save despair. He had lost all, and his efforts had merely served others. Fortune, so long his friend, abandoned him. Henceforth he was no more than a condottiere leading to pillage and massacre his panting troops that had no country, like himself. And so on May 5, 1527, at the hour when Rome put on the flaming robes of sunset, he decided on an assault. At dawn, clad in white, an orange plume in his helmet the better to mark him out for blows, carrying in his hand the standard embroidered with the flaming sword inscribed with that fallacious word *Espérance*, he dashed forward in the van. Barely was he on the first rung of the ladder when he took an arquebuse shot through the heart. He fell. The unhappy man had expiated the crime of having been handsomer, more generous, more magnificent, more intelligent than all the rest. It was the King's jealousy, and the passion of the King's mother, that had killed him at last. With him died feudalism, vanished for ever.

The Hôtel de Bourbon in Paris, on the site of the Louvre, which had seen the wedding of Louis de Brézé and Mlle de Saint-Vallier, had its door painted yellow, that the people might know that here once

lived a traitor, and that a good king had avenged them on him.

On the same date, in the Rouen Archives, we read this note, which shows very clearly the forgetfulness and indifference into which the vanquished fall. In May, 1527, François I hunted at Anet with his friend the Sénéchal. Yet on September 30, 1527, Brézé wrote to Montmorency:

> My wife is very well. God be thanked, and I believe she is out of danger. I assure you that she has been in such a state that they could not tell whether she would live or die.

We like to think that all these emotions were the moral cause of her illness, and that, driven to dissemble, her heart in secret had bled for it.

1529.—The clauses of the Treaty of Madrid signed by the King were accordingly left unratified, and Saint-Vallier, virtually in possession of his property, had not yet enjoyed it. In the eyes of the world, the Constable remained "the traitor", and the royal children were left prisoners. If François I had been the only one to deal with these affairs, they would have remained for a long time in the same posture. Hunting women and hunting the stag were his only care. Anne de Pisseleu possessed his heart. To please her he had asked Mme. de Chateaubriant to return the fine rings adorned with mottoes composed by Marguerite of

Navarre. The cast-off mistress had them melted down and sent them back in the shape of bullion, determined that the same vows should never serve for anyone else. However, they made no quarrel of it, since we shall find the King paying a visit to Chateaubriant in May and June 1532.

Others than he were looking to the execution of the treaty. The little captives were taken to Valladolid, to Toledo, to Granada. Their health was shaken. Especially Henri's, for he was prone to melancholy, and haunted by a secret nostalgia. The new peace that was to deliver them was diligently wrought out by the women, filled with pity for the princes and uneasiness for the realm. An active correspondence was carried on between Louise of Savoy, Marguerite of Flanders, Marguerite of Navarre, and Eleanor of Austria. After much negotiation an agreement was reached at length, and this peace was called the Ladies' Peace, or the Peace of Cambrai (1529), being the work of the princesses. The ransom of the royal children of France was fixed at 200,000 gold crowns, and the marriage of the King and Eleanor was settled.

It may be thought that Diane's influence, through her husband, was not without some effect in this peace. She had all too great an interest in it. Although we find her at Anet at this period, for the meeting of the Estates of Normandy, and the receptions for which

they formed the pretext, it may be believed that she and Brézé kept close watch on the terms of the treaty, in which their honour and their future possessions stood involved. It meant effacing the stain of the late trial. So long as the promoter of the plot, Bourbon, was called a traitor, his accomplices would lie under the stigma of it. That is why we see once more the following clause stipulated, definitely and finally this time.

"The heirs of the noble and famous Constable shall be restored to possession of their property, and every decree against the head of their race and of the army shall be cancelled and abolished."

François I signed. The man who was to go through history down to our own day under the name of "traitor", was thus rehabilitated in 1529, the sentence promulgated against him annulled and expunged, his honour re-established, his property restored. His friend Saint-Vallier could at last enter again into possession of his own property, and even resume his counties of Valentinois and Diois, confiscated under Charles VII. Diane had worked well.

To pay the ransom of the Dauphin and the Duc d'Orléans, an appeal was issued in every town in France. Several great families gave their plate, some cities hung back. We read in the archives of Amboise:

"1529.—Journeys of Maître Jehan Moynard, licenciate, to Tours, to see Monsieur le Général Bohier,

to make remonstrance to the said general on behalf of the property of the said inhabitants, and that it was impossible for them to pay to the King 2000 francs for the said lord, required for the ransom of the royal children of France."

"For the ransom of Messrs. the royal children the Grant' Sénéchal makes promise that the town (of Rouen) would give 4000 crowns."

The poor people were not wrong in mistrusting the Regent and his accomplice the Chancellor; Duprat tried to cheat Spain.

1530.—In the month of May 1530, Montmorency arrived at Bayonne with the Archbishop of Bourges, the President du Bourg, Duprat and the nobility. The Constable of Castile was at Fontarabia, checking the money for the ransom. He found false coin. Duprat swallowed his shame. The Vicomte de Turenne was sent to Spain to wed Eleanor in his master's name. The court came to meet him by easy stages. On Tuesday, July 5, about seven in the morning, there was published to the sound of trumpets in the King's armouries, in the royal palace and at all the cross-roads of Paris "where proclamations were wont to be made" by Maître Jehan Lormier, clerk, in the presence of Maître Morin, lieutenant of police, accompanied by

the clerks and commissaries of the Châtelet, with certain tipstaves, the following proclamation:

"In the name of the King, our lord, be it known to you that our Lords the royal children of France are by the help of God delivered. And therefor that each of us as loyal subjects should give thanks and praise to God, it is hereby enjoined on this day to shut all places of work and to cease from all work and that bonfires be made."

"Incontinently the gentlemen of the Parliament, accompanied by the advocates and attorneys of this (court) went forth from the palace and went to N.D. also the provost and aldermen of the city, quarteniers, sergeants, archers, arbalestriers, hackbuteers. In all the churches of Paris they praised God. And *Te Deum* was sung. The children cried: 'Long live the King and his children'.

"The King set forth to go and meet his sons, went on board on Monday evening, went as far as Langon by Bazas, then Mont-de-Marsan where he went riding until the queen had arrived. He met the princes, kissed them, and the trumpets sounded."

Diane, who had come with the court found again, but grown taller and paler, the boy whose forehead she had kissed two years ago. Now he was a silent adolescent, matured by exile. If we think of what came after, he must have looked with an affection that

already knew how to remember on the beautiful young woman, upon whom he thenceforward fixed his lonely heart. In the noisy solitude that laps him round, she alone speaks to him gently, and no doubt understands him, attentive and motherlike, him who is so unlike the rest, and who already has ceased to be diverted by pleasure.

"Madame Eléonore was presented to the King by the grand chancellor and the Marshal of Spain. She was in a great chariot, covered with embroideries of antique fashion, richly accompanied by ladies of her own country clad in the Spanish fashion, and by princes and prelates. The shrines and relics of the city were carried in procession. The King and she made reverence to each other. On July 7, François married Eleanor at Saint-Laurent de Beyries, in the commune of Treche and Saint-Vidon, in the canton of Villeneuve (at one in the morning, by torchlight, in the abbey of the Clares).

"Eléonore having her head covered with a head-dress of cloth of gold made with golden butterflies, within which was her hair, which hung down to her heels, entwined with ribands. Her bonnet was of crimson velvet, covered with jewels, with white flowers at the ears. Her dress of crimson velvet lined with white taffeta, the sleeves covered with gold and silver embroideries. The skirt was of white satin."

"The Chancellor Duprat (who was evidently not held strictly to account for being a counterfeiter) received her with the princes of the House of France. The people of the town made her a gift of a gold ship, and the whole court went to Bordeaux, Angoulême, Cognac, Loche, Amboise, Blois, etc."

It was a long series of acclamations through France. The people in those days, as in all others, rejoiced without knowing why. The little princes recovered, this new queen, were motives sufficient for them to slake their thirst for joy and show their hope, which stood in the place of all things to them.

Clement Marot, the official poet, sings for all:

Il sont venus les enfants desirés
Loyaulx François, il est temps qu'on s'apaise
Pourquoi encor pleurer et souspirez?
Je l'entends bien, c'est de joie et grand aise.
Car prisonniers (comme eux) etiez aussi
O Dieu tout bon, quel miracle est ceci.
Le roy voyons, et le peuple de France
En liberté, et tout par une enfance
Qui prisonnier étoit en forte main
Or en est hors, c'est triple délivrance
Gloire à Dieu seul, paix à tous les humains.

Nouvelle reyne, ô que vous demeurez
Sentez vous point de loing nostre mésaise
Sus peuples sus, vos quantons décorez,

De divers jeux. Est-il temps qu'on se taise?
De vos jardins arrachez le soucy,
Et qu'il n'y ait gros canon racourcy,
Qui ceste nuict ne bruye par oultrance,
Signifiant que guerre avec souffrance
Pars et s'en va aux enfers inhumains.
Et puis chantez, en commune accordance.
Gloire à Dieu seul, paix en terre aux humains.

Sotz devineurs, vos livres retirez
Toujours faisiez la nouvelle maulvaise
Mais Dieu a bien vos propos revirez
Tant que mentez avec ne vous déplaise
Heureux baron, noble Monmorency.
Ce qu'en as faict (il le fault croire ainsi)
Est du grant maistre ouvrage; sans doubtance
Conseil françois, quoy qu'en ceste alliance
N'eussent mieux faict, les très sages romains
Ne dictes pas, que c'est vostre puissance
Gloire à Dieu seul, paix sur terre aux humains.

Envoy

Prince royal ma terrestre espérance
Si le plaisir de ceste délivrance
Voulez peser contre les travaultx maints
Droicte sera (ce croy je) la balance
Gloire à Dieu seul, paix en terre aux humains.

CHAPTER IV

The Comtesse de Saint-Vallier

1531-1547

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THAT Peace of Cambrai, that return of the royal children, that new queen brought a new hope to France. One period was closing, another period was opening. For Diane too it was a new era. Here ended her private, marital, conjugal life. Hitherto, faithfully bound to Louis de Brézé, dame d'honneur to the Queen, Grant' Sénéchalle of Normandy, she made part of a group, of a decorative whole, among the lesser actors destined to make a frame for the chief players. Only her youth, her beauty, distinguished her. Her high birth, her position at court, her noble and numerous alliances, gave her an enviable place, but not unique. She was among the greatest in the kingdom, but she was not the first. She was among the most renowned, but was not the most beautiful. The scandalous chronicle, the only one that survives and bears witness to a life in the harsh ears of posterity, would have forgotten her, finding nothing to be done with her humdrum virtue. The hour was at hand for her coming into glory with the birth of her legend. Not that she had wrought for it or desired it. She

merely laid hold of it, with that sense of opportunity that marks all great minds. Her years of apprenticeship were over. Hitherto she had held her ground, having saved from disaster the honour, the property, the influence of her house, which had been continually in the ascendant for centuries. To hold ground, and no more, was not in the tradition of the Saint-Valliers. To the exclusion of her father, passed into oblivion, her second-rate brother, her quite effaced sisters, she was the head of her race. We shall see her more and more set upon its greatness. That was because she had for a moment seen it on the verge of falling with the head of its last representative. It was a trial she would never forget. In an instant she seized the reins of its destiny: an expert rider, she would sweep far in the long career at which history still remains astounded. She took her first steps in public at the fêtes Paris gave to the princes on their return, and to its new sovereign.

§ §

A gorgeous fête, said Marot, agape at these rejoicings, which lasted eight days. The tournament of the Rue Saint-Antoine was the high light in the picture. Between the Bastille and the Pont des Tournelles, on the left side of the Seine, stretched the huge lists. The houses were hung with gleaming stuffs, which shone

and shimmered above the banners of the knights. The barrier of the lists was near the Hôtel Saint-Pol, and the stands for the ladies were set up against the newly-erected buildings of the Arsenal. Here queens and princesses took their places. The Grant' Sénéchalle was among them. Her long Leonardo eyes disclosed nothing of the surprise she kept for the court. The King's two eldest sons were to essay their first arms on this day. François, the Dauphin, was fourteen, Henri of Orléans was twelve. When the latter entered the lists, with the pages carrying his banners, everybody turned to Diane as she sat smiling and immobile. Henri wore her colours of white and black, and coming up to salute her he dedicated his first feats to her. In this boyish salute he offered her his heart. The whole life of the Renaissance princess lay between two dates, two tourneys held in this same spot, in which the same prince still wore these same colours, 1530 and 1559. They say that the Sénéchalle this day asked François I. to allow her to accept his son as her knight. The King consented with a smile, knowing what men's vows were worth.

Can we suppose that from this hour, seeing Henri's attachment to her, knowing his exceptional nature, Diane has formed the plan of making him the instrument of her ambition? She cannot love this boy, the same age as her own daughters. She accepts, with no

more ado, this homage that comes without her seeking. She is thirty. Heretofore she has been nothing, since no one hates her. Let us think that she has no deliberate plan, but that sleeping ambition awakes in her, and that at all risks she accepts the offering destiny is making to her fully blossomed beauty.

And fêtes succeed fêtes . . . Soon came the consecration and the coronation of Eleanor at Saint-Denis, on the fifth of March. The ceremonial does not vary from one reign to another. We may merely observe that the Grant' Sénéchalle has a new place in it. At Queen Claude's she was present among the ladies of her own rank, without even being named, without playing a part. Here she is distinguished. She makes her mark. Something has been born in her, till now unexpressed. Her pride grows with the will to seize in both hands a life whose days she sees fleet by too swiftly beside her husband grown too old. This advanced age of Brézé is also perhaps what determines her henceforward to substitute her own personage for his. Soon she will be deprived of his protection. She must not remain without importance, holding her power only from him. She has her own race to fight for, she has her daughters to provide for. Henceforth she knows what life is, she must make haste to establish herself in strength.

Diane de Poitiers, 1ère femme de Louis de Brézé Grand Sénéchal de
Normandie, crée Duchesse de Valentinois par Henri II en 1548.
L.A·GRANT·SENECHALLE

Photograph by Giraudon

MADAME LA GRANT SÉNÉCHALLE
D'apres Clouet, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes

"After the gospel the three ladies appointed to carry to the said dame d'honneur the bread, wine and money for the offering, being in their said low scaffold as declared above, which were Mesdames the Grand Mistress, the Admiral's wife, and the Grant' Sénéchalle, went up one after the other upon the said great scaffold, and first my lady aforesaid the Grand Mistress, with two loaves, one gilded the other silvered. My lady aforesaid the wife of the admiral went after with the wine, and then Madame the Grant' Sénéchalle with a taper of virgin wax, to which the said money was fastened."

We find her again in the first place, at the Queen's entry into Paris.

"After the said dames and princesses, came Madame the Mareschalle de Chatillon, dame d'honneur to the Queen, clad in black velvet trimmed with ermine.

"After Madame the Grand Mistress.

"Madame the wife of the Admiral.

"Madame the Grant' Sénéchalle.

"The said ladies very richly attired, mounted on hackneys with housings of cloth of gold."

Having thus shown herself, established herself, emerged from the crowd of ladies that cumber the court, she returns to Normandy, to Anet, whence Brézé wrote to Montmorency in September 1530.

"The lady of the house commends her to your good favour."

§ §

1531.—Diane perceived the sure decline of her husband, which is what made her come out of the shade in which she had kept herself hitherto. The Sénéchal was old, he was ill. For the last time he received his King at Anet, and there the plan to marry Henri of Orléans to the Pope's niece, Catherine de Medici, was worked out. Let us note this detail. A few days later, the grandson of Charles VII and Agnès, the mighty hunter, whose hunts have remained famous in the annals of venery, the loyal servant of three kings, fell asleep in the Lord at the age of seventy-two. He deserved better than the oblivion in which he has been left, better than the scorn in which he is held as the complaisant husband of a so-called courtesan. Brézé loved his wife. His wife loved him. They lived happy and faithful to each other, and her regret for his end was sincere. We have followed them both; married for fifteen years, no one can discover a cloud in their life together; though not well matched in point of age, yet harmonious in their ideas and tastes. Hatred in later days was to sully those years that were beautiful, dignified, and sometimes difficult, as in the time of the Saint-Vallier trial. The great influence of the Séné-

chal, his services rendered, were the sole causes of its successful outcome. Diana found in him, after the teaching of Anne of France, the high example that was to give her spirit that greatness and nobility which only the ignorant deny her.

From the archives of Normandy, July 23, 1531.

"Letters from the King for the obsequies of M. le Grant' Sénéchal, Governor of Normandy. Before the body to go the greatest number and in the most honourable guise that can be done. Fifty poor men to be given clothes and to each a torch of two pounds from the town armoury."

Louis de Brézé was the last to bear the title of Grant' Sénéchal. François de Valois, eldest son of France, was named Governor of the province.

An ancient and most valuable pamphlet in Gothic character preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, describes the obsequies of the old servant of the crown, whom François I both loved and revered. A few extracts from the little book will give a rapid description of this funeral, which was very fine.

"The XVIIIth day of August 1531, the body of Louis de Brézé, Grand Governor and Sénéchal of Normandy, was borne by several nobles with great numbers of subjects in mourning, carrying torches from which depended several armorial devices of Brézé and his wife, accompanied by the clergy, the

councillors, the court, the Parliament, bourgeois, manants, inhabitants of the said city in great number. And this body was borne to be interred in the cathedral church of Notre Dame de Rouen.

". . . monks of the Bons-Enfants, mendicant friars, cordeliers, Jacobins, Augustinians, Carmelites bearing crosses and candelabra, then those who bore the parish crosses, then the priests wearing their surplices, curés and vicars with a stole about their necks.

". . . then the lieges carrying torches, those of Pont-Audemer, Lisieux, Louviers, Caen, etc., from which hung armorial devices; those of Anet, priests and inhabitants, clad in their surplices . . . the religious of Saint-Ouen, bearing crosses and candelabra.

". . . . the precentors, the canons, in surplices, those who carried the cross and the crozier of the Archbishop of Rouen, himself walking behind them clad in a cope of black gold damask, and on his head a mitre of white damask, in his pontifical state, and around him his priests each with a cope of black damask. Then the bishop of Thessalonica bearing the cross of the Abbots of Saint-Vandrille; (the bishop) of Jumièges, bearing the cross and pastoral staves.

". . . then the gentlemen clad in mourning; then the coursers, the war-horses of the stable, covered with black and white satin. Those who carried the ensigns, etc. . . .

". . . Next an ensign on which was a salamander with the arms of France.

"Next came one who carried the sword on a cushion of black velvet.

"Then one who carried the helmet and the mail coat.

"Then the war-horse, covered with black and with white damask, led by two gentlemen of whom one bore the spurs and the other the gauntlets.

"Then the heralds at arms of whom one bore the arms of France (because of the royal descent of the Sénéschal).

"Then the sergeants at arms of the city.

"Then those who bore the body, four knights, Clercy, Preteval, Lalond, de Clerc. Four barons who carried the four corners of the pall.

"The body was in wax, covered with black velvet, with the collar of the order, a black velvet bonnet, and on the bonnet a chaplet of white pearls.

"Then came the Archbishop of Tours, Mgr de Lisieux, with 'le petit prince du dit' [—— what does this mean?]

"The Bailiff of Rouen.

"Then the ushers of the Parliament, the clerks, etc.

"The church was hung with black velvet and woollen cloth. The body was deposited and the next day interred."

It may be seen that full honours were rendered to the grandson of King Charles, the nephew of Louis XI. Diane in 1535 erected a mausoleum to him that may still be seen at Rouen and which they say is by Jean Goujon. She had a statue of herself placed on the right as though to mark the eternal vigil of her memory. The inscription is neither lying nor hypocritical. She loved that old man, who was kind and who made her great.

Hoc Lodice tibi posuit Brezaee sepulchrum,
Pictonis amisso, moesta Diana vivo
Indivulsa tibi quondam et fidissima conjux
Ut fuit in thalamo sic erit in tumulo.

"Louis de Brézé, Diane grieving for the death of her husband, has raised this sepulchre to thee. Once thy inseparable and most faithful wife, what she was in thy bed she will be in the tomb."

Fidissima conjux . . .

As we look at the tomb, really a beautiful one, Malherbe's verses rise up in the memory.

Et dans ces grands tombeaux où leurs âmes hautaines
Font encore les vaines
Ils sont mangés de vers . . .

Fidissima conjux . . . Henceforth she will never lay aside those two colours, white and black, under which Henri of Orléans had run his first tourney, and

TOMB OF LOUIS DE BRÉZÉ AT ROUEN
Les archives photographiques d'art et d'histoire

in all sober reality she regretted the man who had given her place, and opened the doors of life to her.

Je ne veux point oublier
Ceste amitié conjugale,
Laquelle on doit publier
Pour la plus ferme et loyale.
Ceste humble viduité,
En montre la vérité,
Qui parmi cette hautesse,
Egale à celle des dieux,
Ne montre rien à nos yeux
Qu'une couleur de tristesse.

DU BELLAY.

"If she did not change everything," says Brantôme in his turn, "after her mourning to the point of austerity, but that she attired herself featly and richly, but all in black and white, therein seeming more of worldliness than reformation. She was none of those hypocritical and snivelling widows who bury themselves with their dead husbands . . ."

Certainly not. Too much alive, she was none of those whom grief can cast to the ground even for a moment. She was happy with Louis de Brézé, but she knew that happiness does not always keep the same shape. It must be modified with changing circumstances. From him she had her splendour. Now from herself she would have her renown. She had put for-

ward the hour for resuming her personality, this we saw at the Saint-Antoine tournament at the consecration of the Queen. Henceforth she adopted a name that belonged to her and called herself with no more ado, when signing her papers, Comtesse or Dame de Saint-Vallier. On herself, on her house, she brings to bear the whole force of her being. The better to distinguish her she takes those unique colours to which she will adhere all her life. Faithful to her husband, she will henceforth be faithful to herself. Her lofty, strong personality, once recognized by herself and by others, she will set against all the changes, the vagueness, the inconstancy, the chaos, the cowardice the world can show. This oneness will be the very sign and mark of her superiority. She will be the great independent, who means to derive her glory only from herself. She is thirty-one, she is in full possession of her completed beauty, of her mind, finished in culture and in judgment. Has she aims? No one could say. Is she already founding upon her youthful lover hopes that the future will justify? It is impossible to cast back over the road she travelled. Let us consider matters closely. Henri was not the Dauphin. The crown must go to François, and this François, a friend of the King's favourite, already had no love for the Sénéchalle. Certainly a royal son of France, even a younger son, is a power, but a negative power; he can

Photograph by Giraudon

DIANE DE POITIERS IN HER WIDOWHOOD, DRESSED IN BLACK AND WHITE

only act by opposing. Would he be able to act? He was a gentle, affectionate, melancholic creature, and his father did not love him. His captivity had made him too early disillusioned, he was like his mother Claude, whom he lost so soon, and whom he had loved. Homage and sympathy went to the Dauphin, who was brilliant like François I, and who had his father's charming and dangerous gaiety. But this eagerness for affection, the neglect in which he was left, was to inspire Henri with so much the greater attachment for her who alone was not hostile and who understood him, who encouraged him in all the best that was in him. For her who greeted him with a smile, gave him special attention, the sentimental lad was ready for an unexampled passion. And at first it was a filial love that he felt for Diane. But since he was not in favour, since logically he could not be king, why should we deny in her the beauty of a disinterested feeling, maternal and softly, pityingly, affectionate. Why should she not like him, this dreamy, poetic boy of twelve years old, whom she must needs love tenderly with an affection at first most pure, that no one has ever called in question, for want of comparing dates, ages, characters, keeping to the ordinary logic of human feelings. Already he is Cherubino, chivalrous and poetical, he has all the graces of childhood, all the boldness of unconscious virility. He will show

it later. Henri is not a sensualist like his father, he loves books. Diane with her name, her beauty, her reputation, her high lineage, is for him not as yet a promise of pleasures to come, but a being of poesy. For her we must observe this singular anomaly that throws a light on the originality of her nature. Married to a man forty years older than herself, she takes as her knight a youth twenty years younger. Is this unbalanced? The two will satisfy her heart. For that heart is free, absolutely independent. Her love is, and always will be, intellectual above all things. She will hold it in bondage, for the senses will have, and have had, little part in it. She is not an egoist, but an egocentric. She receives impulsion from no one. In herself is the centre and focus of her life. A lover of her own age would have been her equal, her master perhaps. Diane never had a master. She had two friends whom she dominated, that is certain, Brézé, and Henri, the man weakened by age and the submissive youth. This nature, the signs of which she dissembled in her youthful years, will henceforth be wholly made manifest. Diane is fully trained. Already she dominates a prince, a circle, before long a whole age whose tastes, tendencies, policy she will mould and alter. She has awaited her hour which could not fail to strike, but to hasten whose coming she has done nothing. She was the Grant' Sénéchalle. Now she is Comtesse de

Saint-Vallier, laying aside everything, even down to a name, that is not hers. On herself, on her house, on her family, she will concentrate her attention and her powers. Her greatness will be to be equal to her ambition. Her fortune, to have met at the hour desired with the favourable circumstance that served her, or rather that she knew how to use for her service. From her father's treason she derived greater wealth. Her husband died at the moment of the return of the princes, at the birth of Henri's love. Thus in the course of the years we shall note these astonishing opportunenesses that, as much as her intelligence, will be the agents of her fortune. She must be praised for having made use of them, for our mischances, or what we give that name, are often neglected chances.

§ §

On the twenty-second of September Louise of Savoy left Fontainebleau, where there was the plague, to go to Romorantin. She was obliged to stop at Grey in Gâtinais, where she died. They found her coffers full of gold that she had stolen from the treasury. Nobody regretted her, she was cruel and miserly. Her son was soon consoled, although him at any rate she had tenderly loved.

As if the scenery was to be completely changed to

make way for a new play, the Chancellor Duprat died this same year. Was it remorse that made him found the Hotel-Dieu, to ask of men and God forgiveness for his irreparable ministry?

The way was cleared to leave the road open to other influences, other greedinesses. François I. could not live independent. His mother had held him in bondage, freeing him from any need to think, and now he was given over to his all-powerful mistress, Anne de Pisseleu.

Mlle. d'Heilly, daughter of Antoine, Seigneur de Meridor, was born in 1508. It was at Bayonne she first saw the King, on his return from Madrid. He loved her and made her marry Jean de Brosse, whose father had been the Constable's friend. François made him Duc d'Étampes. "I can make a noble," he once said wittily, "God alone can make an artist." Of a brilliant, finely cultivated mind, the new duchess became the Maecenas of the wits. They called her the loveliest of the learned, the most learned of the lovely. She hated Diane, who was compared to her, for her wit, her culture, her beauty. There was eight years between them. Anne took advantage of this to create around her rival a very premature legend of age. It was in this centre of jealousy we must in the first instance look for the origin of the offensive stories that posterity was to cling to. Only another woman was capable of

this first peal of the tocsin against the woman of thirty-two. It was aimed also at the new attachment of the young Duc d'Orléans, in the hope by this means to break it off. But he paid no heed, and Diane took no notice. She felt herself beyond attack, beyond comparison. The freshness of her complexion was a standing reproach to the youngest girl. In vain will they accuse her of owing it to magic practices. In reality her only recipe is a life of the most perfect balance, the most exact hygiene. From her childhood she never departs from the most rigorous discipline. Just as she did at Chantelle, so she did at Anet. Rising at three in the morning, she takes a bath of cold water, then to horseback, and a three hours' ride; then she comes back to bed, meditates in solitude and relaxation, eats sparingly, and gives the rest of her day to society. In this way from her youth and through her mature years she provides against age, which is better than correcting it. She is the model from which the Renaissance will take its nine laws of beauty:

"Three things white: the skin, the teeth, the hands.

"Three black: the eyes, the eyebrows, the eyelashes.

"Three red: the lips, the cheeks, the nails.

"Three long: the body, the hair, the hands.

"Three short: the teeth, the ears, the feet.

"Three narrow: the mouth, the waist, the ankle.

"Three big: the arms, the thighs, the calf.

"Three small: the breast, the nose, the head."

Assured of these insignia of beauty, Diane smiles and leaves her enemy to make her premature onslaughts against her invulnerable physical perfection. Their hostile forces were being exercised upon a more serious battlefield—the question of religion.

Two currents had taken shape, one with the Duchesse d'Étampes, Marguerite de Navarre, François the Dauphin, in favour of the new ideas of the Reformation; the other with Diane de Poitiers, the Guises, Montmorency, Henri of Orléans, who were for the defence of Catholicism, of monarchical and national ideas. The King, with no personal convictions, inclined rather to the first, swayed by his mistress, his sister, and his favourite son. The Queen held her peace, indifferent to political, religious, or sentimental questions. The two camps divided between them the artists and the poets, who cheerfully changed their ideas with those who paid them. Marot, for instance, who had set up a passion for the Grant' Sénéchalle:

> Etre Phoebus seulement je desire,
> Pour être aimé de Diane la belle

and who found it more profitable, getting no return for this, to pass over to the Duchesse d'Étampes. Ron-

sard and his band were to be on the side of the Catholics.

§ §

It was perhaps the necessity of self-defence that forced Diane to extremes she would not have touched except for the violence of the attacks. There is nothing so potent to thrust us into the path we were hesitating to enter upon as the obstacles and criticisms that aim at turning us aside from it. The boyish love of the Duc d'Orléans for his friend was bound either to develop or to die out. The prince's nature obliged him to give himself wholly or not at all. The first who took possession of his heart would share it with no one and would without a doubt keep it for ever. He was one of those who love only once, and for ever. It was natural that his nascent desires should turn to her who was his counsel, his refuge in the loneliness to which he was left by his own kin. Wearing her colours was he not affirming his feelings? She was in everything made to tempt him. It was that very tempting that the King's favourite sought to forestall by harping on her rival's age. Faced with this boyish desire, did Diane yield to an inclination, she, hitherto chaste and sedate, nowise prone to the things of the flesh, whom her old husband's affection had satisfied, was she moved? was she troubled? We can hardly believe it. In any case

she has kept her secret. Knowing her to be ambitious, logical, calculating, careful above all of her honour and of the greatness of her house, we could never see her as a second-rate woman, obeying the whirl of the senses. That is impossible. Having to defend herself, a widow who must needs keep her influence, she saw in Henri, the leader of the opposition, a valuable instrument. She did certainly love him, with a great maternal love. But to keep him at the moment when a woman was bound to assume a decisive influence over him, the gift of herself became inevitable. She was past the age of rash follies. To take possession of the prince whose mind and heart were hers already she must become his mistress. Her enemies, in their dread of this outcome, had actually impelled her to it. Diane giving herself to Henri made him hers for ever.

No certain date has come down to us for the event. To me it seems impossible to deny it, though some have ventured. Why should they? That fall in no way minishes her, she was a widow, free, no one till that moment could find fault with her conduct, it was only later that it was attempted, and without proof. At that moment she was sovereign mistress of her body and of her mind. A royal prince was not unworthy of her. She was undoubtedly his initiatrix, and gave him so much that the wondering and enchanted youth could never after find another mistress to give him as

HENRY II, KING OF FRANCE
École de Clouet, Bibliothèque Nationale

much. Henri found in her beauty, intelligence, the perfect distinction of an untainted lineage, judgment and fidelity. Where is the lover that can hope to find the like?

1533.—This must have been in 1533. The Grant' Sénéchalle wrote later with her own hand these curious verses that leave no doubt as to whom they were meant for:

Voici vraiment qu'Amour un beau matin,
S'en vint m'offrir fleurette très gentille,
Là se prit-il, d'aournez votre teint
Et vestements violiers et jonquille
Me rejettait à tant, que ma mantille
En était pleine . . . et mon coeur en pâmait
(Car voyez-vous flourette si gentille
Estoit garçon frais, dispos et jeunet)
Ainsi, tremblante et destournant les yeux
"Nenni, disoi-je—Ah, ne serez deçue
Reprit Amour," et soudain a ma vue
Va présentant un laurier merveilleux
"Mieux vaut, lui dis-je, être sage que royne
Ains me sentir et frémir et trembler.
Diane faillit et comprenez sans peine,
De quel matin je prétends reparler.

The confession is gay, and just in the frank manner of the time, which had not yet been captured by hypocrisy. It is charming. To know how to love, and

to be able to express it, are two qualities rarely joined together. Henri must have appreciated the double delight.

What perhaps hastened the liaison was the announcement of Henri's marriage to the Pope's niece. The preliminaries had been signed at Anet, before the Seneschal's death, two years previously. It was now to be carried out. This marriage was a danger to Diane's influence. What was this young princess, who was being brought into France for reasons of policy, but whose power to charm was as yet unknown? Most cleverly Diane implanted in the heart of her young lover the force of her irreplacable love. She bathed him in her soft perfumed atmosphere. She lapt him round with her arms, her bosom, she intoxicated and dazzled him. A bride might come with all her virginal ignorance. She would enjoy a social rank and place, she would have nothing of the man enchained for ever.

§ §

This marriage, long planned and prepared by Italian policy, was that of Catherine, daughter of Lorenzo de Medici and Madeleine de la Tour, who had both died young. In vain had the Pope's astute diplomacy aimed at the Dauphin. François I. turned a deaf ear, he was looking to another alliance for his well-beloved

heir. Henri seemed to him proper to serve his aims. The agreement was made. Diane could see without displeasure this alliance with a kinswoman of her own, whose sole nobility lay in being akin to her. She already had relations with the young ménage that helped her ascendancy. The family of the Medici appeared in the thirteenth century. From the last quarter of the fourteenth dated its appearance in politics. They were merchant apothecaries, it was said. But through the house of Boulogne and Auvergne, from which Madeleine de la Tour had sprung, the girl was a descendant of Godfrey de Bouillon. Catherine was born in Florence on April 13, 1519. Great-granddaughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent, grand-niece of Leo X, she carried in her veins the heritage of parvenu merchants, whose glory was composed of equally celebrated luxury and crimes. An orphan at twenty-two days old, she had been brought up in the convent of Murato. By a miracle she escaped the sack of Rome by the hordes of Bourbon. The difficult times she knew as a child prepared her for her destiny. The examples of treachery she had before her eyes excuse and explain her doings. She was called the 'Duchessina'. She had big eyes like all the Medicis, a white skin, a certain round soft grace, the prettiest leg that could be seen, of which she was very vain. This marriage with a prince of the House of France was a thing beyond

her hopes. Her dowry was 1200 gold livres, and 100,000 ducats in jewels and precious stones. She was fourteen years old. Catherine made her entry at Marseilles with her uncle the Pope on Andrea Doria's squadron, saluted by the firing of three hundred guns. The pontiff's galley was entirely covered with gold brocade, and was preceded by the captain's galley, carrying the Blessed Sacrament. Clement was received by the Constable, de Montmorency. He passed through the town, seated on the *sedia gestatoria*, surrounded by cardinals and prelates on horseback, and a train of lords and ladies. François I. came to kneel before him. The pontiff embraced him. On October 27, 1533, the contract was signed. On the 28th the nuptial benediction was given them by the Pope, and the mass was said by the Cardinal de Bourbon. At night the two courts met at dinner, at three tables, one presided over by the Pope and Queen Eleanor, the other with François I. and the cardinals, Henri, Catherine, the Dauphin. At the third table were Diane and the Queen's ladies.

A ball followed. The *gaillarde* was danced. The Grant' Sénéchalle excelled in dancing. How easy it was for the experienced courtier that she was, in the sumptuous magnificence of her white and black dress, to eclipse on the spot the little insignificant Italian girl, the pledge of a contract, not the high election of a

heart that knows how to choose. Henri had eyes only for his mistress.

They say the nuptial couch of the young bridal pair had cost 60,000 Roman crowns. It was placed in a room hung with brocade. Clement VII came in the morning to see for himself if the marriage had been consummated. François I. pulled open the curtain to watch the little couple 'tilting'. Catherine was only a hostage, an instrument of policy in her uncle's hands. They had accepted this marriage with the younger son of France, reckoning upon a future always full of surprises. Among the officers of the princess's suite had been placed a certain Count Sebastian Montecuculi, of rather vague origin, who had been specially recommended to the Pope by Duke Alexander. He had been a doctor at first, then passed into the service of Charles V, lastly with the Medicis. Had the terrible Italians from that moment thought of making their niece Queen of France? No one now can say. The young woman had in any case orders to observe narrowly, to keep silent; supple and docile, she was to act only in accordance with the orders coming from her kindred beyond the mountains. A difficult rôle for her youth to sustain, but one that her precocious experience made possible for her.

The court she was entering was divided into two camps, the heads of which were women. The Duchesse

d'Étampes, with the King in her thrall, and François the Dauphin in subjection; Diane de Poitiers, with Henri in vassalage, the Guises on the watch, Montmorency on the alert. To keep balanced between the two parties was the only resource of the young bride. She was a negligible factor and was neglected. The best thing for her was to manage to be endured by the two favourites, accepted by her husband, and above all loved by the King. Alone in this world of intrigues, she very speedily seized the essential data of the problem, and solved it to perfection, by perpetual observation and constant suppleness.

§ §

The King, grown prematurely aged, henceforth showed the puffed face, the quenched eye that Titian has left us. He suffered from the disease that was to carry him off. Given over to women, he dragged about with his ministers, his court, his furniture, his suite of twelve thousand men, from château to château, plundering the treasury, selling offices, a wearied reveller, travelling, not like Louis XI to keep an attentive eye on his kingdom, but to escape the boredom that seized him at every halt. Mario Giustiniano, the Venetian ambassador, complains of these perpetual flittings.

"Never during the period of my embassy did the Court stop in the same place for fifteen days consecutively."

It was Fontainebleau, Blois, Amboise. With never a thought of material difficulties François went on buying. Hunting in Sologne, on September 6, 1519, he had purchased a hunting pavilion called Chambourg. The architects, Denis Sandeau and Pierre Trinqueau of Amboise, press on with the monstrous pile. Five thousand five hundred hectares were surrounded with walls, four hundred and thirty rooms laid out, thirteen staircases built. It was to be the very symbol of that excessive vitality, that profusion, that sick prodigality, which mark these uneasy years of a king whom pleasure had exhausted and set on edge. This uneasiness, this chaos of which Chambord was the translation into stone, was also in all men's minds. Contrary currents were set over against one another like waves, whose violent clash produces crests of iridescent foam. It seems to me that the roofs and chimneystacks of Chambord reproduce their turmoil, immobilized by the centuries. In every domain appeared the new spirit out of which the modern era was to emerge.

The Reformation was born in 1520, with Luther. Much more than a religious question was it a social one. The veiled angers against authority, the ancient

Gallic spirit of liberty, both presided over those speedily suppressed ferments. It is a mistake to think that these religious quarrels at this time, as in ours, were purely about dogma. No doubt reformers such as Luther and Calvin, the reformists of the group of Meaux, Briçonnet, Lefèvre of Étaples, and Roussel, were sincere. The monk of the Wartburg, translating the Bible into the vulgar tongue, burned with the laudable desire to escape from the tyranny of Rome and to place the truth within reach of everybody. But for the others, philosophers, princes, gentlefolk, who followed their religion more by custom than by conviction, and who thought their very culture could distinguish between the divine and human element in the rites, Protestantism and Catholicism were soon political labels, covering very different ambitions. The people, blind and passionate, might be fanatical, but it was difficult for the courtiers or the learned to be so. For a Marguerite de Navarre, for instance, enamoured of novelty, of pure intellect, the new ideas exercised an intellectual charm to which was joined a very feminine sentimentality in favour of the persecuted.

"What I did," she will say, "I did more for compassion than by conviction."

It was the anarchic and revolutionary character of the Reformation that struck the nationalists and conservatives above all. It was its contempt for the law

and for royalty that offended them. The emissaries of the new religion ran up and down the countryside, promising their followers that they should pay no taxes other than they themselves should agree to pay. "Kings having no other power than it pleases the peoples to grant them."

"And when anyone spoke to them of the King," writes Montluc, "they replied that they knew no kings but themselves, and that he who was called the King was an infant they would give a flogging to teach him to live like the others."

It was an idea that was making its way, and from which the best minds had much ado to defend themselves. The pamphlet of Étienne de la Boétie was a very characteristic example.

"The people has always made lies for itself so as after to believe them."

Frederick the Great will write in his Mémoires that if it is sought to reduce the causes of Protestantism to simple principles, it will be seen that in Germany it was the work of cupidity, of love in England, in France of ambition and novelty. "Novelty" is exactly right. A strange folly, the praise of which Erasmus wrote, took hold of the world, every man crying like Gargantua "Give me to drink? . . ." Luther opened a spring, but so did Ignatius Loyola, whose principles brought a reform no less complete,

and Machiavelli likewise. A method of introspection, analysis, psychology carried to the extreme limit, the application of which is still far from being ended.

Novelty, novelty . . . in the intellectual and the material sphere as well. Look at all those caravels eager for the horizons, winging their way towards the unknown. In 1503 it was Paulmier de Bonneville visiting the Indies with the *Espoir*. In 1506 it was Jean Denis of Honfleur, who touched Labrador. It was Ango of Dieppe, lading cargoes for every trading port in the Levant. In 1534 it was Jacques Cartier discovering the St. Lawrence.

At the breath of this wind that bows every head, François I dreams of a universal monarchy. On the morrow of Pavia he sends his ring to Soliman the Turk, in token of alliance, and Veronese gives the infidel sovereign a place in his *Marriage of Cana.*

Novelty. Novelty. Give us to drink. We might say that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the centuries of women. The warrior fame of Joan of Arc, the political renown of Anne de Beaujeu dominate them. Innumerable are the feminist writings. Eloquent the claims put into words by the moral philosophers. Cornelius Agrippa devoted his work to woman.

"The whole difference between man and woman is merely physical."

"The soul of the woman is not different in sex from the soul of the man."

"Adam in Hebrew means 'earth', Eve means 'Life'." The *Phaedo* was translated, and all the lovely intellectuals became enthusiastic for the contemplation of the Beautiful and the search for the Absolute. Anne of Brittany had had a poet in her pay, Jean d'Auton, charged by her to make the apologia of the female sex and to sing its praises. The same poet had in the same spirit exalted Anne of France. "This wise and prudent lady who had conducted and disentangled by her good sense the great affairs of the realm."

We have read the opinions of the Duchesse de Bourbon, which she put in practice so successfully. And of Louise of Savoy also. Already there had appeared the tendencious works of Jean Molineti, the *Chevalier aux dames*. And that of Symphorien Champion, *la Nef des dames vertueuses*, of Jean Boucher, *Triomphe de la noble dame*; of Jean Dupré, *Palais des merveilleuses dames auxquelles les chambres principales*, etc.

And there are women who are their own advocates. Helisende de Cresme published in 1538: "Les angoysses douloureuses qui procèdent d'amour contenant trois parties composées par H. de C. . . . laquelle exhorte toute personne à ne suyvre Amour."

However, Louise Labbé, the *belle cordière* of Lyons, whose free manners bespeak enfranchisement, will

write these words of a very curious intellectuality. "The next greatest pleasure to love is to talk of love."

Soon Marie de Gournay, Montaigne's daughter in the spirit, will take up after Christine de Pisa an "Essay sur l'égalité des hommes et des femmes".

And lastly, Guillaume Postel, one of the greatest Utopians of the Renaissance, makes himself the authorized champion of the new ideas, which he will carry to the last extremes.

"Les très merveilleuses victoires des femmes du nouveau monde, et comment elles doivent a tout le monde, par raison, commander et même ceulx qui auront la monarchie du monde vieil", dedicated to Mme. Marguerite de Navarre.

She it was, the King's sister, whose witty figure dominates this intellectual ferment. A complete woman in her curious complexity, if she studies philosophy with her tutor Saint-Marthe, she loves to sew with her ladies. It is she who leads the crusade of the spirit, grouping around her those lofty minds that will remain the brightest lights of this century, dazzling as it was. Tolerant and sensitive, if she sinned it was by being too catholic. But by her side at any rate are found the best among those who lead the crusade of humanity and culture, from which one distant day there will perhaps emerge the most certain formula of life. "To know and to think", says Nicolas de Cusa,

the friend and master of the Pearl of Princesses. "To know and to think, to see the truth with the eyes of the mind, that is true happiness. The older one grows, the greater is this happiness; the more one applies oneself to the search for truth, the more one feels oneself inflamed with the desire to possess her. Even as the heart only really lives in so much as it loves, so it is the life of the spirit to strain after the truth. In the midst of political agitations, in the labours of every day, in all the contradictions of the world, let us boldly and freely send our eyes towards the luminous regions of heaven, let us raise our eyes to the source of all truth and all beauty. It is good to study one's own mind, and the diversities of human intelligence during the course of the ages."

Another current from across the mountains was to modify not thought, but its form. On the eve of a poetic revolution what was the determining influence? Ronsard was only a child, and his father had returned with the royal children. Already he was rhyming without a plan, taking his inspiration from the rhythms then in fashion. Now at the court there shone a curious spirit around whom the literati gathered in a circle. This was Luigi Alamanni. Born in 1495 in Florence, the son of the Ambassador Pietro, he spent his childhood in the Oricellari gardens with the Ruscelaïs and Machiavelli. To him the latter dedicated his life of

Castruccio Castracani (1520). Having plotted against the Medicis, he fled to France (1522-23). He became poet in ordinary to the Queen of Navarre, and went with her to Madrid when she was going to visit her brother in captivity. He went back to Italy, from which he was exiled a second time, and thenceforward attached himself to François I who covered him with liberal favours. He had the revenues of the King's garden, at Aix, and divided his life between Provence and Touraine. He lived in the manor of Clou, at Amboise, in which Leonardo died in 1519. Luigi can both see and sing. He gives readings in the midst of a ring of princesses. Étienne Pasquier shows him to us commenting upon the *Divina Commedia* before the King and his Court. He reads Petrarch and makes him popular. He is the inspired singer of the land of France. Its variety, its beauty, dictate to him the cantos of the *Cultivazione*, which he dedicates to the King, as well as his translation of *Antigone*.

It is to his inspiration we must look for the sources of the theories of the Pléiade. The Pindaric Odes of Ronsard were imitated from Alamanni. It was from the Florentine poet the French poet borrowed the general shape of his antistrophes and epodes.

In 1544, being then major domo to the Dauphiness, Luigi married Elena her lady of the wardrobe, daugh-

ter of Girolamo di Jacopo Bonanuti, and ended his days in Touraine.

To this rapid glance at the political, religious and intellectual tendencies that displayed themselves at the time of Catherine de Medici's arrival in France, we may add this observation with regard to society. Feudalism died with the Constable de Bourbon, and François renewed his nobility while at the same time abasing it. His need of money made him drain the treasure of his aristocracy, and in attracting it to the court exhausted it with luxury by severing it from its resources in the land. He made a breach between the nobles and the nation. The court sold titles and offices to the new-rich, which was the origin of the bourgeois aristocracy of the Bourbon Kingdom of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

"Are infinite numbers of false nobles, whose fathers and forbears have wielded arms and done knightly deeds in shops of cornchandling, vintnery, drapery, in mills and in farms, belonging to the seigneurs, and yet when they talk of their lineage, they are descended from the crown, shoots of the field of Charlemagne, of Pompey, of Caesar."

Étienne Pasquier can say:

"Tis by way of mockery and derision that we call such an one *gentilhomme de ville*. Those who are fain to call themselves noble of good reason leave the towns

to choose their dwelling in the country, both by cause that the greater part of our fiefs are there placed, and by cause that in this way they deem they warrant themselves against all the ill-opinions men might have of them, to wit that they trade and traffic in a town."

The nobles did not pay the tax, but they were forbidden every money-making profession. Shut out from the community of work, they grew poorer and poorer, hemmed in between prejudices that kept them in their poverty, the obligation to make a figure in the king's entourage, and the rise, the pressure of the new-rich, who had the advantage of being able to earn money and then to buy the titles that gave them rank beside the prince. The court favoured this ascent that filled its treasury, and cared little for the discontent of the old servants of the crown. Everything was then lost for them, honour, money, and even their names and titles.

§ §

And now here is Catherine, the daughter of shopkeepers, marrying a son of France. She came plump at the right moment, both for her social and her national origin. Her observing eyes quickly took in all these currents among which she was to sail with circumspection. To wait, to be silent, to smile, to discriminate between the weaknesses and the interests of each,

in every camp to make allies for herself. And first of all she conciliated her father-in-law's good graces. She flattered him, showed herself a tireless horsewoman, enlivening his melancholy, holding her place, in spite of everything, in that brilliant assembly.

"Among the Queen's twenty-seven demoiselles and dames d'honneur," says Brantôme, "there were none but ladies of great houses, damsels of good repute, who appeared in the court like goddesses in heaven."

Catherine was not pretty, with her big prominent eyes, her fleshy mouth, her tallowy complexion. But she had a beautiful hand, and an admirable leg. She took advantage of this by having her saddle made with a horn, which allowed her to show her calf. Her first care was to flatter the favourite, who was all-powerful over the King's weakened mind. Marie of Hungary writes of her:

"The demoiselle does everything she pleases, and everything is ruled by her, indeed an excellent reason why things are well conducted."

It was she who had Montmorency disgraced, the premier baron of France, because he was Diane's friend. In less than four years she finished four ministers who displeased her. In 1539, Charles V asked permission of the King to go through France on his way to the Low Countries. The Duchesse d'Étampes advised to arrest him on the way. Passing close by the

lady the Emperor dropped a diamond of great price at her feet, she picked it up: the sign and seal of their alliance. We may read in the chronicles of King François of the marvellous welcome he made, always magnificent, for this irreconcilable enemy. The King's two sons went even into Spain to meet him. Everywhere along the route of his journey lords, bourgeois, aldermen, according to the word sent forth, fêted the imperial guest. At Bordeaux, at Poitiers, at Amboise, at Chenonceaux, Blois, Chambord, were fêtes and acclamations. And everywhere was inscribed the menacing device 'Plus oultre', which it seemed no one was minded to understand. The cold and distant Emperor passed on his way, he had at least made an ally of the favourite. Her only guide was her hatred for Henri and Diane. In 1544, when war is resumed between François I and Charles V, allied with Henry VIII, the Duchess will be accused of betraying the secrets of the operations. She will determine the King to sign the treaty of Créquy. Bound to the Protestant cause she plays the foreigner's game. She embodies the spirit of enfranchisement, of expansion of the frontiers and of the mind. She supports Italianization. If with the Queen of Navarre she favours the creation of the Collège de France, it is because the chairs in it were open to all the savants in the world, thus breaking the barriers of a narrow, and for her stifling, nationalism.

Her perfidy, for which Cellini blames her in his Memoirs, was flagrant. A champion of internationalism, her ideas, which taken as a whole can be defended, were at the time premature and dangerous.

Over against her stands Diane de Poitiers, protectress of the Catholics and of the national idea. To her also Catherine turns a soft mien, though with more effort. To Diane the King had entrusted her to learn the good fashions of France. The little princess very quickly saw how things stood between her husband and the Sénéchalle, and made no attempt to struggle and defend herself. Such a rival, who had the ascendancy in age, in beauty, in experience, the prestige of her high birth, the strength of her alliance, was formidable indeed. Upon her, who was all-powerful over Henri, depended the little foreign girl, whose marriage was looked on as a mésalliance. Did she suffer within her heart? No one can say, for she remained secret about herself. Her pride was certainly hurt, and she would await the hour for her revenge. That hour was to be long in coming, and no one could foresee it. Diane waxed greater from hour to hour, thanks to favouring circumstances which aided her in the strangest fashion.

1536.—1515, 1518, 1531, 1536, such are the stages of her ascending life. A mysterious drama was to serve her more than all intrigues and all calculations.

The King having broken his word, war blazed up once more between him and Charles V. Provence was invaded. François I put himself at the head of the army, taking with him his three sons, François, Henri, Charles. Now the Dauphin, keen and ardent of temperament, had just ridden through the forests along the Rhône; being hot and thirsty he asked for something to drink. His cupbearer, Sebastian Montecuculi, carefully placed with him by the Medicis, made him take iced water. Immediately he was seized by a fever, and died at Tournon on August 10, 1536. We must believe that presumptions against Montecuculi were strong, since he was quartered. The King, who adored this son of his, was for a moment in despair. The Medicis had what they desired: a niece who would be a queen. Diane had as her lover the Dauphin of France. She did nothing to bring about this new fortune, her luck alone wrought for her, but she was ready to receive it. Maintaining herself firmly in the place she had won, without hustling men or events she was still becoming greater. With a sure, harmonious, rhythmic pace she moved to her exceptional fortune. That her youthful lover, the neglected, taciturn younger son, should suddenly become the one who would be all-powerful on the morrow, was something she could never have foreseen. She welcomed the promise of it, and rejoiced at the stroke her enemies could

not prevent. Her father was the son-in-law of Louis XI, her husband the grandson of Charles VII, she was the mistress of the Dauphin, her house was maintained in its rank and place, she was careful to establish her daughters. On January 2, 1538, she married her eldest girl, Françoise, to Robert de la Mark, Duc de Bouillon, Prince de Sédan, grandson of the famous Boar of Ardennes, known by the name of 'Fleurange, le bel aventureux.' She turned an eye upon the rising power of the Guises; she intended her second girl for one of them, but the matter was important and was to be negotiated with much circumspection and care. Then a daughter was born to Henri, by a Piedmontese, they say, Filippa Duca, who was later shut away in a convent. Nobody knew and nobody saw this momentary mistress of the Dauphin, and the writers of memoirs treat the tale in very sceptical fashion. The child, called Diane of France, was in Diane's lap from her birth, and everybody thought it was her own daughter. They pretend that Henri wanted to proclaim this, but that the Sénéchalle replied:

"I was born to have legitimate children by you, and I will not suffer a decree of Parliament to declare me your concubine."

From this moment her empery is absolute. This new bond attached the lovers still more closely to one

another, their liaison was recognized as all but legal. Marino Cavalli wrote to Venice:

"This lady has undertaken to teach, to correct, to counsel Monsieur le Dauphin, and to incite him to all actions worthy of him."

And Lorenzo Contarini adds:

"The King his father loved him not much."

He must needs count with him now; Henri is his successor, and those who reckon on the future freely turn to him. The attacks of his enemies will be all the more violent. Bitter will be the darts hurled against her who loves him and sustains him. It is from the entourage of the Duchesse d'Étampes that the shafts are sped. Clément Marot, her servant, lets fly this epigram at the New Year of 1538:

Que voulez-vous Diane bonne,
  Que vous donne,
Vous n'eûtes comme j'entends,
Jamais tant d'heur au printemps,
  Qu'en automne.

And again we have a poet of Champagne, Jean Vouté, who publishes a collection of Latin poems more violent still.

In Pictaviam anum aulicam.

(Against her of Poitiers, an old woman of the court.)

"Painted bait catches no game", he says.

"And you might purchase an overplus of what makes a woman, yet would not obtain what you want of your lover, for you would need to be alive and you are dead."

Diane was thirty-eight. She from whom originated these very feminine attacks was thirty-one. The difference was not so enormous. She endured with a smile these strokes that never touched her, for she could challenge with her health and her beauty all the young women of her day.

A more serious peril hovered over her. It lay not in the vain attacks and the lying fault-finding of her enemies, but in the barrenness of the Dauphiness. If Catherine could not secure the royal line, now entrusted to her keeping, she would be repudiated. Would her successor have her submissiveness, her suppleness, her patience? If more beautiful, would she not be a rival to be feared? Italian and superstitious, Catherine gave herself up to all the practices suggested to her by the magicians and sorcerers she gathered around her. She followed all their suggestions. According to Albertus Magnus, the herb known as shepherd's rod, periwinkles pounded to powder and mixed with earthworms, gives women the desire to conceive. The ashes of a frog, the genitals of a wild boar, produce the same effect. According to Photius, a glass of mule's stale drunk every month by a bar-

ren woman will make her fertile. The middle finger and the anus of a foetus born two months before its term, make excellent amulets. Another author affirms that hare's blood, and the left hind paw of a weasel steeped in vinegar, are very efficacious. Lastly, according to Blérien, a girdle made of goats' hair, steeped in asses' milk and worn above the navel by the woman who wishes to conceive, will make her the mother of a male child.

The Dauphiness must needs try everything. But the surest advice came from the Grant' Sénéchalle. Brantôme tells us she sent Henri every night to sleep with his wife, and lavished advice on him. So that later he gave her a present of 5,500 livres, in return for "the good and commendable services she hath heretofore done to the queen". At last Catherine decided to have a child. She never stopped again. François, the first born, appeared on February 10, 1542, Isabella in 1545, Claude in 1547, Charles in 1550, Henri in 1551, Marguerite in 1552, François in 1554. The danger was averted.

§ §

1539.—This moral victory was to be cemented for permanence with a material victory. Hitherto we have seen her rather served by circumstances than making them. Her luck favoured her again. In 1539, her father

Jehan de Poitiers died at Pizançon. By his will he left his property and his titles to his son Guillaume, and if the latter died without male issue, to his eldest daughter Diane:

"And in case that our said son and universal heir has no male child, descending from them in direct line, by legal marriage, and that the line masculine of them should fail, in that case we substitute and with our mouth name and appoint to be our universal heiress, Diane de Poitiers, our very dear and well beloved daughter above named, and after her death, we substitute and name the male children and the descendants (male) of Françoise de Brézé her eldest daughter in direct line and legal marriage."

This programme was carried out. On March 22, 1546, Guillaume, seigneur de Saint-Vallier, signed his will at Étoile, leaving no issue. He gave his sister the barony of Sérignan with the request that she would add his arms, azure six bezants argent and a chief or, to her or him of her male issue, if she should have any, to perpetuate the memory of the house of Poitiers and its glorious marks. Diane continues to bring together the destinies of the house into her skilful hands. As a river on the way to its estuary increases with all the tributaries it encounters as it passes, she will concentrate and embody the efforts of her race. Without her ancestors she would not occupy the

place she does, but without her they would have sunk in oblivion, like many illustrious great families, extinct with time.

Diane must needs go to the Vivarais to render the last dues to her father and her brother. Having the care of her family tombs, she must not neglect them. Aymar de Poitiers had built, in 1500, behind the chancel of the Church of Saint-Vallier, a funerary Chapel which he endowed with an original foundation, in 1504, of two daily masses, according to the document deposited with Maître Chabannes, notary. In 1514, and in 1527, Jehan de Poitiers added a new foundation of a daily mass. In 1546 there was a fresh foundation for Guillaume. The revenues set apart for these services came to 237 livres, and were faithfully paid until the Revolution. The remains of Aymar, Jehan, Guillaume, were deposited in a vault hollowed under this chapel. They were still to be seen in 1863.

Benvenuto Cellini in his memoirs describes this journey of Diane's with the court, going to pay her respects to her own.

"Messer Luigi Alamanni," he says, "smiled and addressed certain compliments to me, to which his beauty and the sweetness of his voice added a new charm."

"That was on the last day of October, in Dauphiné, in a castle the name of which I forget."

Saint-Vallier, no doubt, where they still show the room occupied by Henri and his mistress.

Diane at this period had to fight many lawsuits.

The inhabitants of Arcis, an estate her father had left her, among other things wished to enclose their township with ditches and walls, and thus were depriving their sovereign lady of free entry into her castle. On April 27 there was a settlement, by which the inhabitants engaged to compensate Diane for the section of land they were taking from her; to leave her the keeping of the bridges, in charge of the officers she should appoint, to open the gates at any hour by night as well as by day to carters and goods, etc.

Another suit was with her sister Françoise, who on April 13 had married Antoine de Clermont, and Anne the wife of Henri de Clermont and de Tonnerre; and yet another against the Duchesse d'Étampes, who wished to take Anet from her, on the pretext that it was a domain of the crown.

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She moves easily among these difficulties, the discipline of her life allowing her to confront them, her astuteness and intelligence to come through them successfully. This litigiousness is one of the facets of her character which has been a reproach against her. Would she have done better to allow herself to be

despoiled? Armed and well armed, she understands how to defend herself, and bring to reason those who might try to injure her.

That does not prevent her from living in all its splendour the life of the court, which continues as brilliant as ever on all occasions.

In 1538 were the magnificent fêtes for the marriage of Madeleine, the King's daughter, to the King of Scotland. The palace was covered with tapestries. For the supper the table of François I was of marble covered with gold and silver plate. The evening banquet at the Louvre was a great triumph. The jousts were an unforgettable spectacle; each knight wore the colours of his lady. Henri as always bore those of Diane. Young Ronsard was chosen to accompany the young couple to Scotland, as a page.

1541.—Another wedding at Châtellerault, the Duc de Clèves and the Princess of Navarre. A *fête champêtre* at la Bataudière, open-air theatres, clarions, trumpets, tilting at the ring:

"All wore upon their helms great and beautiful plumes, each according to his livery."

Entry in state, banquets with torches, fifes, trumpets, tambourines, clarions, flutes, horns.

"Which sounded for the King when he entered."

Despite his hunting and his fêtes, François I was

declining rapidly. By 1538 he could only speak with difficulty. The virulence of his disease had cost him his uvula. An abscess brought him within a finger's breadth of death. He remained swollen, rotten, the soul half extinct. All eyes were turned upon Henri, now the Dauphin. He was the power of the morrow, and all regarded him with friendly looks, he had put on the assurance his friend had given him. In her had been his strength, and would be his power. Matteo Dandolo, the Venetian ambassador who came to France in 1542, says:

1542.—"The most Serene Dauphin is twenty-three years of age, he is of a very proper presence in his person, tall rather than short; neither fat nor thin, but so well built that you might think him all made of muscles, untiring in hunting and in the practice of arms, in both of which he is very good, and perhaps better than any knight in France. I have a number of times seen him joust long and excellently, and perform with as much skill as courage everything that it is possible to do, in fencing and at tennis. Yet he is of a nature taciturn rather than otherwise. He laughs, and shows outward sign of laughing, but seldom."

"His hair is black, his complexion almost livid. The Dauphin spends his revenues with as much regularity

as splendour, both for the ordinary service of his house and for his own personal expenses."

Order, moderation, the goodly ruling of life, seriousness in ideas and in affairs, such was the result of Diane's influence, as opposed to the disorder and showy incoherence of the King and his entourage.

1545.—In 1545 Charles d'Orléans died, the last son of François I. The new favourite of his father and the d'Étampes faction, he had been a centre of constant opposition to the Dauphin and his friend. Their customary luck removed him. Their party was strengthening itself both socially and politically. It was the party of tradition, of solid nationalism, Catholic and French. A barrier against the foreigner, a revival of the ruling ideas of Louis XI, affirmed and proclaimed by his daughter. Diane was, besides, in harmony with the great humanists, Erasmus, Postel, More, Campanella, who denounced the definite opposition of Protestantism not merely to the traditional religion, but to the renaissance. They remained attached to the Catholic forms and to the monarchy, to the social hierarchy, which were henceforth a vital necessity in a state of powerful organization.

It was under their influence that François, seeing disorders increase in spite of everything, decided to take action against them. It is usual to attribute to

Henri the initiative in violent repression. It began in the reign of his father. Jean Dubourg's execution was in 1434. The affair of the *placards* was in 1535. So too the solemn procession, and the very curious edict against printing, that secret agent of the propagation of the nefarious ideas, belonged to the same year. But who could dam that current? Aldus Manutius in Venice, the Estiennes, the Plantins, kept their presses firmly in hand, and that was the helm of a ship whose destinations remained unknown.

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1547.—It was in the midst of fêtes and financial and political difficulties that the star of Diane rose to its zenith. In March 1547, at Rambouillet, died King François I. Henri was in bitter grief. He had a tender heart, but his mind fully understood the responsibilities that devolved upon him. A great silence fell upon France, which the paladin had filled with his luxury and his disorderliness.

His effigy was laid, as was fitting, upon a bed covered with cloth of gold edged with ermine, the hands joined, the body clad in a camisole of crimson satin, and a tunic of azure satin sprinkled with fleurs de lis. A great royal mantle covered it with violet velvet, sprinkled with fleurs de lis, and trimmed with ermine. Upon the head, above a velvet bonnet, was a closed

crown. In the right hand a sceptre, in the left a hand of justice. Around were silver torchères, holy water vessels, wax candles, and the hall was hung with cloth of gold.

After lying in state for eleven days, the real body was placed in a coffin. The long series of masses was begun for the repose of this soul that had never thought of anything but pleasure. The procession moved off to Saint-Denis, followed by pages and great dignitaries, who being unable to be present at these interminable ceremonies, were represented by their effigies.

This was the hour when Diane's crescent rose on the horizon. Her enemies were reduced to silence, the protagonists of the last acts were departing in death or retirement. At the same time as François I there vanished his untiring rival Charles V. What an example he gives the world, the great emperor whom the fatigues of glory and of power throw back upon voluntary humility and solitude. Retiring into a little house near Brussels in 1546, he had an obsessing idea of abdication. He wished to be no longer treated as emperor, he had seals engraved for him without crown, or eagle, or golden fleece. On the slopes of the Estremadura, at Yuste, he built himself a dwelling sufficient to live in, with the few servants strictly necessary to his infirmities. There he meant to shut himself away, before his time, interposing between his death and his

life this breathing space of peace, which he had missed on earth. Before going thither he desired to see once more the city where he was born, Ghent, where he had spent his childhood. Lodged in a house that faced the palace, he remained there a few days given over to his memories. Then he went to Zealand and journeyed on to Spain. His sister Eleanor, the Queen of France, came and joined him in his retreat.

It is not because he was Emperor of Austria, King of Spain, of the Indies, of Flanders, a clever politician and a peerless sovereign, that Charles V is great. It is because to his unbounded power, to his inexhaustible riches, to all the gold of America, to all the palaces of the Continent, he preferred the humble refuge in which he could at last in peace measure the vanity of glory and enjoy his own soul. The king who died in corruption, the emperor who died in contrition—which makes the more goodly figure to the mind?

Both, obeying their own urging, are a fine subject for thought, a fine poetic theme, fine examples to ponder in the desert void of great faces that is the modern world.

CHAPTER V

The Duchesse de Valentinois
1547-1559

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IN SPITE of its halo, the end of this reign had been sinister. Henri was taking over a kingdom ruined and in a state of ferment. The executions of the Protestants, which were later ascribed to Diane's inspiration, did not cease to follow one another. At Toulouse, at Bordeaux, at Rouen, at Grenoble, the pyres were lit for the belated reaction. Étienne Dolet, one of the most celebrated victims, was executed in 1546. There was no need to make a martyr of him. He was a criminal accused of murder, pardoned by the king, a hardened offender and agent of the Protestant party, a dangerous agitator, who enjoyed a long impunity thanks to his high-placed protectors. Hatreds she was far from being the only one to deserve were in later years concentrated upon Henri II's favourite. Escaping from the influence of his sister and his mistress, François entered on the policy he might regret not having always followed. When his son came to the throne the whole responsibility for it was laid at his door. To François is still attributed the glory of the Renaissance, which only attained its full development under Henri II.

It was he, in short, who brought to fruition the hopes and the disappointments whose origin was due to his predecessor. But François I was lacking in vigour, and he was a great artist. He is lauded rather for his tendencies than for his achievements. With him was seen the dawning of learning, the first attempts in literature, which the Pléiade were to bring to perfection, printing, the study of ancient languages, adventures by sea. Leonardo da Vinci, Primaticcio, Germain Pilon, the sculptors of the school of Tours, Cellini, all lent him their renown. Under his reign the print was born, the art of enamel reached its perfection with Limosin, stained glass with Pinaigrier, Clément Marot published François Villon, but it was Diane who had *Amadis* printed. Lastly there shone beside the King, an incomparable star, his sister, the Pearl of Princesses. He reaped the advantage of this marvellous flowering of wits and great artists, but it was under Henri II that the artistic glory of France knew its greatest fame.

The customary period of mourning being past, the new King prepared to take the place destined for him. He had the consecration ornaments and attire, which had been used by his predecessors, brought to Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Seeing that they had deteriorated, he had new ones made for himself. A camisole of azure satin, sandals and boots of damasked leather, lined with crimson taffeta, broidered with fleurs de lis. His doub-

let "enriched at all the slashes with a rich embroidery of pearls four fingers wide," and "three crescents intertwined and carrying the cipher of the double D linked and joined with an H".

This king who dares on the day of his consecration to wear his mistress's initial, displaying his heart to all men, is not that a fine thing? He the conservative, the defender of tradition, who was about to war so violently against the offensive liberties of the Protestants, is he not completely in harmony with his age, in spite of himself, in proclaiming his heart's choice in the teeth of every protocol and every convention? But he is the perfect lover, the Amadis, the true knight even in his morals. Catherine is the official companion of his throne, but he means to affirm in the sight of all that before being a king he is a man and that his Lady is his only thought. Diane accepts this homage and triumph with her unvarying smile.

On July 25, 1547, the consecration took place at Reims according to the ancient rites:

"On the right of the great hôtel, after the ecclesiastics and the gentlemen of the Chamber, there was a scaffold between two pillars, decked with fleurs de lis, with gold goffering, on blue satin and ermine, with black velvet on cloth of silver, thereon were seated the ladies and demoiselles of the household, and above, a like stage for the queen six months gone with child."

It was Philibert Delorme, the King's architect, a sort of superintendent of fine arts, who arranged the fêtes. They were magnificent, as always.

1548.—Immediately after the consecration, Henri II undertook a progress through his States, Champagne, Burgundy, Bourbonnais and Piedmont. In July 1548, the Queen and her ladies accompanied him to Moulins and stayed in the confiscated castle of the Constable.

"There was there a palace magnificently builded by the dukes, with noble gardens, forests, fountains and every kind of splendid luxuries worthy of the dwelling of a prince."

Diane, back once more in the haunts of her childhood, must have pondered the frailty of human greatness. Here in power had lived the woman who moulded her soul. Now she slept at Souvigny, Anne of France whose wealth, scattered at a King's caprice, had been the whole care of her ordered, prudent life. In Rome, in exile, lay the great magnificent rebel, whom cruel injustice had vanquished. But dead also was she who had been the cause of all that ruin, that ungrateful and nefarious Louise of Savoy. Dead the brilliant king who here knew the mean depths of jealousy, and dead the emperor who benefited by these turmoils. She must needs make haste to enjoy the good things of the world. She must lay up good store of precautions and alliances. Hitherto everything had

Photograph by Giraudon

THE THREE FATES, WITH THE FEATURES OF DIANE DE POITIERS AND HER TWO DAUGHTERS FRANÇOISE AND LOUISE DE BRÉZÉ

Musée de Cluny, École de Germain Pilon

been for her. Faithful to her for sixteen years, Henri, all powerful now and still the lover, was to ensure her that glory for which she was always athirst. Time flies, the days are short, given over to the cares of success; we must seize every pleasure as it flits by.

First of all she has Chenonceaux given her.

"Letters patent:

"Henri, by the grace of God King of France, to all men present and to come greeting. We give you to know that we, in consideration of the great and very commendable services our late cousin Loys de Brézé, in his lifetime Comte de Maulevrier, Knight of our Order, and Grant' Sénéchal of Normandy, aforetime did to the late King of good memory, our very honoured lord and father, whom God assoil, which services were such and so notorious that all men know and understand them, and that the benefit of those services still falls not only to us and ours, but also to the whole State and public weal of our realm; having regard also to the fact that by reason of the great charges the which at the time of the said services our late Lord and father was constrained to bear, and always has been, from the aforesaid time to his decease to defend him against the great wars and invasions stirred up against him in every part of our realm, he was not able before his decease to make any

proper return or reward for those services; for these reasons wishing for our part to satisfy them, to the intent that all good and loyal servants and lovers of the welfare of our said State may take example thereby, and have reason to increase their loyalty and fidelity to us-ward, we have to our very dear and well-beloved cousin Diane de Poitiers his widow in recompense of these services given, ceded, quitted, conveyed and relinquished, and by these presents, of our certain knowledge, full power, and royal authority, do give, quit, cede, convey and relinquish to her, her succeeding heirs and assigns, in perpetuity, the chastellenies, lands and seigneuries of Chenonceau and Rosde, which consist of houses, castle with drawbridge, granges, courts, gardens, etc., etc., etc.

"Given at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in the month of June one thousand five hundred and forty-seven, and the first year of our reign.

HENRY.

"For the King. CLAUSSE.

"Visa contentor gratis: LEPICARD."

This reminder of the service done by Brézé in the affair of the Constable has a certain astuteness. If we remember all the benefits Diane derived from it we can praise her very lively sense of realities, her knowledge of men, the adroitness of her conduct, the per-

fect understanding of a lesson that will be profitable to her to the end of her life.

The first care of the Grant' Sénéchalle was to have the Duchesse d'Étampes banished. She had been living in terror since the King's death, awaiting the vengeance of her rival, even, they say, in dread of being assassinated. But Diane was satisfied to send her to a distance, now harmless, shorn of her pride, unavailing. She was packed off to her estates, where she continued to uphold the Protestant cause to no purpose. Limours was taken from her again. The sequestration she had placed on Anet was raised. She was nothing now.

Henri II, in 1548, signed letters patent remitting the confiscation proclaimed in the Parliament of Paris against Jehan de Poitiers and prescribing new infeoffment and investiture of the lands of Saint-Vallier, in favour of Dame Diane de Poitiers his daughter. On October 8, 1548, letters patent signed at Saint-André gave the title of Duchesse de Valentinois to the Dame de Saint-Vallier for life. Thus ended the age-long suit over that arbitrary spoliation; Diane resumed the possession of a family property that had been raised to a dukedom for Borgia, and added a new lustre to her name. Without losing any time she organized its revenues, for she was precise, practical and quick. The administration was given to Guillaume Amazan, prior of Heyran. Her captain castellan was Jean Valernod,

who collected the feudal taxes and gave an annual account. She established a *juge lieutenant*, a *procureur greffer*. Her notaries were Maîtres Mathieu Crozet and Jacques Bruchet. Year by year we can follow her dealings with the inhabitants. She left nothing to chance, and knew her revenues. She has the meadowland of Brassière, on the islands known as the Thousand Isles, brought in. She taxes the sellers on Saint Nicholas' fair-day. She claims for herself alone the oven rights in the country, from which she draws a certain profit. In the archives of Montelimar we can still read the following:

"Deliberations held by the consuls Franchessin and Savani with reference to the letter from Mme. the Duchesse de Valentinois dated the 18th December from Saint-Germain-en-Laye, containing among other things 'as to the observing of the franchises that have been sent to her, that they may rest assured that she will entertain them'. And of the dispatch of the franchises to Etoilles whither Madame is to come (January 3, 1549)."

Her eye was everywhere, on things little as well as great. Nothing was left to chance. A woman of business, a woman of the court, well knowing how to arrange her time, this remarkable faculty is the primary reason of her success. The wondering and admiring poets sing of it.

André Buffet, in this year 1549, rhymes these verses:

Et celle là qui en la court royalle
Est en faveur, la Grant Sénéschalle
Doit-elle pas icy le rêne tenir,
Où par vertu on la veoit parvenir?

Virtue? Let us say worth, ability, incontestable knowledge of life, from which she henceforth captures all the forces she will know how to keep.

§ §

1549.—So now she is well provided. The possessions of her family recovered and increased by those she is able to obtain, she thinks of the future. Her eldest daughter married and a mother, she turns to occupy herself with the second. She must have solid alliances, well placed partisans. She places her nets adroitly for the Guises, whom she has long been carefully watching. Diane let it be known that she wished for one of them, Joinville, the eldest son of the house. This marriage, which would give the duchess new power, was naturally violently fought by the adverse party, the Protestants whose dreaded enemy she was. Châtillon turned Joinville from this alliance. Diane said nothing but made her displeasure felt. The Guises saw their mistake, and that the advice they had been given was due to motives of jealousy. The negotiations

were resumed, this time for d'Aumale, Joinville's younger brother, and this time they were successful. Brantôme confuses the two moves, but in the main his story remains true:

"François de Lorraine having given his opinion on his brother d'Aumale's design to marry the daughter of the Sénéchalle de Valentinois, as much favoured by the King as blamed by honourable people, he replied (Gaspard de Coligny) that he thought more highly of a little reputation than a great deal of riches, which was very disagreeable to the two brothers, as being meant to turn them aside from increasing in power and dignity."

On August, 1547, Diane married Louise de Brézé, dame d'Anet, to Claude de Lorraine, Marquis de Mayenne, Duc d'Aumale, at the Château of Fontainebleau. By this marriage she became allied with Mary Stuart, presently Dauphiness of France, and niece of her son-in-law. She joined herself with this rising family, whose eight members held the royal house in check for fifty years. D'Aumale's brother François was killed by Poltrot de Méré, his nephews le Balafré and the cardinal were killed at Blois under Henri III, and his son Charles, Duke of Mayenne, was to dispute the throne with Henri of Navarre.

On August 20, 1548, there disembarked at Roskoff Mary Stuart, the Guises' niece, cousin of Louise the

daughter of Diane, who was married to the Duc d'Aumale. She was entrusted to the care of the Duchesse de Valentinois, who was to teach her the ways and fashions of France. She was six years old, and the ceremonial surrounding her was fixed immediately.

Henri II wrote: "As to what you ask me, what rank I wish to be held by my said daughter the Queen of Scotland, I shall advise you that I intend that she shall go before my daughters, for the marriage between my son and her is fixed and concluded, and without that she is a queen crowned and as such I wish her to be honoured and served."

The girl already despised her Medici mother-in-law, who was to be revenged later, and loved the favourite, who drew new power from her.

This constant rise of the duchess could not fail to excite violent hatred. To defend herself, from the beginning of her lover's reign she was sometimes forced to go as far as cruelty. A wretched affair cast its shade upon Diane at the very outset of the reign. This was the duel between Jarnac and La Chataigneraie.

Guy Chabot, Seigneur de Jarnac, an agreeable cavalier of some thirty years of age, "very choice to be well arrayed," because the lover of the Duchesse d'Étampes, who, as may well be thought, followed the conduct she attributed to Diane, without any scruple whatever.

To reward his good offices she married him to her sister Louise de Pisseleu. François I called him Guichot. Now it appears that he told the Dauphin that he was the lover of his mother-in-law, Madeleine de Puy-Guyon, and had money from her. Henri repeated this to La Chataigneraie, who talked about it. There was no question of Guichot's challenging so high an adversary for this indiscretion or this lie, if it was a lie. It was the friend of the Dauphin and Diane who must needs uphold his master's honour. François de Vivonne, Seigneur de la Chataigneraie, a tall fellow and a good swordsman, demanded satisfaction from Jarnac for venturing to contradict the Dauphin. François I refused permission for the duel. Under this flimsy pretence lay hidden the mutual hatred of the two favourites, for the two champions were really defending their colours. On the death of the king the quarrel blazed up again, and the encounter took place on the terrace of the château de Saint-Germain. It was a ferocious duel. Against all expectation, Jarnac disarmed his opponent, and wanted to spare his life. But in his rage at being beaten, Vivonne from the ground insulted him and refused the gift offered him; he let himself be slain under the eyes of the court, which laid this death at the door of the all-powerful Duchesse de Valentinois. An incident that swelled the list of the malcontents.

HENRY II, HORSEBACK
Clouet, Musée du Louvre

Life resumed its career amid a succession of fêtes. On June 16, 1549, Henri II made his entry into Paris. He was arrayed in white armour, "subtly" polished and exquisitely engraved, inlaid with gold in the engraving, and over his armour a *saye* of cloth of silver. The girdle was of silver, studded with gold, and the furniture of his sword the same, enriched with many rubies and diamonds. His hat was white satin, covered with silver braid, with a white plume sewn with great numbers of pearls. And for ensign a great diamond with three pearls pendant. Along the whole route, which was magnificently decorated as far as Notre Dame, were triumphal arches and allegorical monuments. Jehan Martin, secretary to Cardinal de Lenoncourt, and the engineer Thomas Sebillet were in charge of the programme. Jehan Cousin and Jehan Goujon, the sculptors, made the figures. The galleries on the Seine were made by Sibec de Carpi, the King's joiner.

A great tournament, advertised since the 1st of April, was fought by the holders François de Lorraine, Duc d'Aumale, Robert de la Mark, both sons-in-law of Diane, Jacques d'Albon de Saint-André her kinsman by marriage, Gaspard de Sault Tavannes, Philibert de Marcilly, Seigneur de Cipierre. The tourney took place in front of the Hôtel de Graville belonging to the Grant' Sénéchalle, opposite the Tournelles.

On June 18, Catherine made her entry into Paris.

Among the ladies round the queen's person the eighth was Madame de Valentinois, accompanied by Monseigneur the Duc d'Aumale.

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Diane was in very truth all-powerful. She was now forty-eight. Her liaison with Henri dated twenty years back, years employed first in maintaining her ground, then in increasing her state. She was preponderant. Nothing could weaken the King's devotion to her. For him she embodied all the best in the world that a man could wish for. She was the friend of his mother Claude, the dream of his boyhood, the initiatrix of his senses, and the light of his spirit. He could say to her what Dante dedicated to Beatrice:

"*Luce intelletuale piena d'amore*. Light of intellect, full of love." She was his All, his one All for ever and everlasting. She lapt him round with her strong soft arms, she drove away bad dreams from his pensive brow. She was lovely, would be lovely always. She might grow old, but age never unbeautified her, it ennobled her. The calm of her heart, the physical discipline of her life spared her the wrinkles that come of disquietude. This disquietude was kept far aloof by the oneness she put into her activities, her policy, her ambition. That oneness was her strength and her greatness. Her will was rectilinear. She was too simple

to be understood by those who wander among manifold feelings and barren complexities. This marvellous love, by its mutual fidelity must have been the admiration of the sentimental; at any rate the example is rare enough for it to be more praised than decried.

"It was great pity," said Mézeray (writing a century later, however) "to see a young prince adoring a fated face, full of wrinkles, a greying head, eyes half dimmed and sometimes red, and full of rheum, in short, what is looked upon as the leavings of several others."

It is a still greater pity to read these lies from the pen of a historian who might have been better informed. Diane was always beautiful, without artifice or make-believe. Her influence she owed to her heart and her intelligence. If Henri preferred her to all women, it was because, dominating them, she could offer him what is but rarely met with, qualities and beauties any single one of which would have been enough to merit attachment, and which he had the good wit to know how to appreciate at its unique worth. Her counsels were precious to him, her company delectable. Once more a Venetian, Luigi Contarini, can bear witness to it.

"She is a woman of intelligence, who has always been the King's inspiration. She is *au courant* with everything, and every day the King ordinarily goes to her after dinner and remains conversing with her for

an hour and a half, and he tells her of everything that happens."

"The Queen," he says again, "could not endure at the beginning of her reign such a love and such favour on the part of the King for the duchess, but since then, at the King's insistence, she has become resigned, and endures it patiently. The Queen even continually visits the Duchess, who on her side renders her the best services in the King's mind, and often it is she who enjoins upon him to go and sleep with the Queen."

Is that the behaviour of an uncompromising mistress? She knows the presence of an official spouse is necessary, a figure head whose influence she does not fear. She herself is the real sovereign. Catherine could not be her rival either physically or morally. Diane fears no one. She harmonizes and pacifies, and the royal ménage is at her mercy.

If Diane desires to remain young, it is not to deceive herself or her entourage. She keeps all her strength to enjoy her maturity, the delights of which she knows how to relish. No one ever knew better how to be a mother and a grandmother with pride and joy. She lived surrounded by her daughters, whose fortune she had made and over whom she kept constant watch. The daughter she had borne to Henri was the object

of her tender cares. Diane de France won the admiration of her contemporaries.

"I think," says Brantôme, "that no lady was ever better on horseback, and she was very lovely of face and of figure. She spoke Italian, Spanish, etc."

For her sons-in-law she is full of attention. She calls d'Aumale her "son."

"I entreat you," she writes about him, "to say to my son not to take so much pains, for the fear I have lest it may injure his health."

The children of Henri and Catherine are hers. It is she who chooses the nurses, supervises their education, questions on their behalf Jean-François Fernel, her doctor, and Madame d'Humières their governess. She says "we" speaking of the royal family and herself. She sends remedies. In every letter she speaks of the King:

"I send you a present for Madame's nurse . . ."

". . . For I should be very glad to do him a pleasure for the service he has done me (M. Fernel)."

She says "we", and the cities of France always associate the two lovers in their homages. In the register of the deliberations of Rouen from 1548 to 1557 it is recorded that the "councillors of the city went to offer to the Duchesse de Valentinois two great basins and two ewers of silver gilt with fine gold, weighing 48 to 50, who said that she had not deserved such a pres-

ent, and that she would do the city a favour should the case arise".

It is fully understood that these gifts were not disinterested ones. The ordinary channel of the royal favours was the hands of Diane. All knew that flattering her was the way to reach the softest spot in Henri's heart.

§ §

What was the man who deserved this exceptional affection and knew how to return it? Henri II is an unappreciated and misunderstood person. Between his brilliant, empty, father and his sons, those interesting and unfortunate degenerates, he shows a dull and effaced figure. His character needed to be studied at close quarters to attract. He had unforgivable qualities, those from which easy opinion turns away, for, as we have said, it is only interested in excess. The wars he waged were profitable rather than brilliant, the very opposite to those of François, which inflamed the imagination, and damaged France. Henri was an affectionate creature, a sentimentalist, faithful, truth-telling, an honest man, and, if considered closely, a great king. He adored his mistress, he loved, with a passionate friendship, Montmorency to whom he wrote:

"Not seeing you, the days seem years to me, for I

shall spare nothing that lies in my power to see you again."

"I entreat God and Our Lady that I may as soon as possible be free of the pain in which I am, having lost sight of you." So too he suffered from his father's lightness. His meditative spirit, his love of reading, his disdain for political and sentimental fluctuations, made his adolescence unhappy, and the immobile strength, the will to harmony of his friend were his sole refuge. Henri, Duc d'Orléans, and subsequently Dauphin, then king, is an attractive study for those who are not misled by appearances. Moderate, profound, silent, full of a goodness that all recognized, the poetic countenance of a hero of romance rather than a conqueror, he passed unnoticed like Brézé; only the testimony of Diane saves him from oblivion. That testimony counts. It is because she noticed him as a "dreamy boy" that we desire to know what it was that captivated her and attached her before interest had anything to say.

For we always find ourselves brought up against the same phenomenon. The loud publicity his noisy misdemeanours procured François I assured him the rather stupid indulgence of posterity. If we must draw from out the shadow a Maintenon, a Beaujeu, a Henri II, one sign marks them all: dignity and honour, with a horror of explanations and lying verbiage. Diane escaped indifference through a misunderstanding. As

what she is believed to be she survives, as she really is she will perhaps interest but few. Let us venture to take away her mask. There will always be enough of the ignorant to maintain her legendary fame, which conceals her true glory.

Diane de Poitiers was not a courtesan.

Henri II was a great king.

Clouet has left us a portrait of him which must have been a close likeness. He is seen standing, hand on hip, above the pommel of his sword. In his right hand he carries his gloves. On his head a toque of curled feathers. He stands out in all his tall stature against the marble-paved floor, and the green satin curtains at the back. The beard is black against the white muslin of his shirt collar. The eyes are both vivid and profound of expression, with the peculiar contraction of the left eyebrow, characteristic of the King's face. He gives the impression of great bodily vigour, and weakness of personality. The homesickness of his years in Spain has remained in him like a stagnant mist. He is king out of duty, not from desire. Marino Cavalli, one of those Venetian ambassadors to whom we must always return because of the veracity of their accounts speaks of him as follows:

"Thus the fortune that should have fallen to the lot of the other brothers seems to have all come together to him who now is the Dauphin, whose qualities prom-

ise France the worthiest king she has had for two hundred years. This hope is still a great solace to this people, which consoles itself for its present misfortunes by the thought of better things to come."

Those lines belong to 1547. Matteo Dandolo came back on embassy when Henri had become King.

"His Majesty is in his nine-and-twentieth year, and though I have already described him as a prince of pallid countenance, livid and so melancholic that many of those who are his companions said they had never seen him laugh heartily, to-day I assure you that he has become gay and that he has a ruddy complexion, and is in perfect health. He has little beard, yet he shaves it; his eyes are rather large than otherwise, but he keeps them down-looking, his face from one side of the jaw to the other from the front is lacking in width . . .

"His Majesty is religious, he does not ride on Sundays, at any rate not in the morning, and I wish to tell your Excellencies that Madame la Sénéchalle, his favourite, told in what a devout mind the King was at the moment of receiving the crown, and having asked him since to tell her what it was he had so fervently prayed God for, the King answered her that it had been for no other thing than this: that if the crown he was about to take promised a good government and ensured the welfare of his peoples, God

might do him the grace to leave it long with him, but that otherwise He should take it from him with all haste."

Lorenzo Contarini continues a little later:

"Henri is the sole master of a great State, being now thirty-two years old and eight or nine months. Of tall stature, built in proportion, black-haired, a goodly forehead, bright black eyes, a large nose, an ordinary mouth, and his beard coming to a point, two fingers long. The whole gives him a most engaging figure, breathing a noble air of majesty . . .

". . . He is very healthy of body, only his teeth cause him suffering . . .

". . . He is of a natural goodness so well known that no other prince can be set against him in this respect, not even going back many years. He desires the good and works for it, he is easy of access and refuses audience to nobody. While he is eating he continually has someone to converse with him on particular subjects, and he listens to everything and replies to everything in the most courteous fashion. He is never seen in anger, except sometimes when hunting. . . . Thus we may say that by reason of his nature he is truly well beloved. He is temperate to a certain degree, for as for carnal pleasures, if we compare him to the King his father, or to some kings defunct, we may call him very chaste and there is this to boot that he

conducts his affairs in such a way that no one can talk too much about them, which was not the case with King François; hence the court, which then was most licentious is now sufficiently orderly. His Majesty eats and drinks very temperately. He is regarded as less liberal and magnificent than his father, perhaps because he gives largely to a few. At one single time he gave the Duchesse de Valentinois the control of all the offices of the kingdom that are obtained from the new king for a certain payment, and from this she drew 100,000 crowns and more. He gave also at one single time to M. de Guise, the Constable, the Maréchal de Saint-André, the two tenths of the clergy, which brings in 800,000 crowns.

"His Majesty does not fall short in his religious duties, he goes to mass every day, hears vespers on saints' days, and goes to the processions at certain times of the year, and honours all the principal feasts by touching, with as much patience as devotion, numbers of scrofulous sick, who at the mere touch of the King, declare themselves healed. The King is naturally intelligent and has a great memory. He speaks French, Italian, and Spanish well. He is not lettered, and simply knows how to read and write . . .

". . . The King his father loved him little, and in his lifetime not only did not train him to business of State, but even did not summon him to his privy

council, so that he came to the throne four years ago, devoid one might say of any notion pertaining to the government of so great a realm, hence he placed himself entirely in the hands of the Constable, who has done, and does everything . . . nevertheless it is seen that from day to day his Majesty tends to act of himself (*va facendo da se*)."

By putting these various testimonies side by side we may get at the truth. We are about to see the setting on foot of the legend that was the only one to survive. Dandolo had said: "For conversation he devotes himself to that of Madame la Sénéchalle de Normandie who is forty-eight years of age. He has a real love for her, but people think there is nothing sensual in it, and that this affection is as between mother and son. They declare that this lady has undertaken to teach the Dauphin and incite him to all actions worthy of him."

Five years later: "But the person the King unquestionably loves and prefers is Madame de Valentinois. She is a woman of fifty-two, formerly the wife of the Grand' Sénéchal of Normandy, and grand-daughter of M. de Saint-Vallier, who remaining young and beautiful was loved and admired by King François and by others too, according to what everybody says." Time as it goes on scatters its cast-off garments on the way. Saint-Vallier becomes her grandfather and Fran-

çois I her lover. The *"many others"* are nameless, calumny takes no heed of precision, "*what everybody says*" is enough, the Protestant libels are beginning to have their effect. Diane's past falls into legend as it recedes; it is interesting to follow its successive distortions, without being surprised to find only the worst retained.

Giovanni Capello succeeds Lorenzo Contarini from 1551 to 1555. He continues the narrative.

"As for his Majesty's way of employing his time, it could not be more sober and wise; the King fills it only with things useful and honourable. In summer he rises at dawn, in winter when it is light, he begins his day by making his prayers devoutly, then he goes to the secret Council that is called 'l'estroit', into which come the Constable, Monseigneur de Guise, M. de Vendôme, the Grand Maréchal, and in which they deliberate on peace, on war, on armaments, on the troops, on supplies, on everything that pertains to the administration of the realm. Thence the King goes forth to attend mass, after which he dines, but with very little appetite, and one might say absorbed in his own thoughts. The King then devotes himself to the study of letters."

(That is more true than to believe him unlettered as the previous envoy made out.)

"After this he goes riding . . .

". . . His Majesty is thirty-six years of age, his figure is tall and well built, his face handsome and agreeable, his complexion somewhat brown, his manners amiable. He is courteous and affable, and he deigns to speak to all comers, be they ever so humble of degree."

The ambassador's nephew has left us this glimpse of the prince in a private letter.

"When we were introduced into the hall where his Majesty usually takes his meals, in the palace called Louvre looking over the Seine, his Majesty was standing, clad in a rich doublet of black damask trimmed with velvet, and set off with the richest ornaments. He wore a justaucorps of white leather, upon which were embroidered two golden crescents, arranged so as to seem like two Ds, the double initial of the Duchesse de Valentinois. Within the entwined Ds was seen an H, the initial of his Majesty's name, a very plain allusion to the feelings the King openly professes for her, for even as these two crescents are closely linked and joined by the embracing of the two Ds, so are the souls of the two lovers joined and united in a close attachment. The Swiss and the King's guards are all clad in the same livery, with a silver crescent on back and front, bearing this device *'Donec totum impleat orbem'*."

This boldness in avowing his love is something no

less remarkable than his constancy. Remember that on the day of his consecration Henri blended the two letters of his own and his mistress's name. He neither varies nor recants, and this public homage to her who deserves it becomes great in the end through being openly proclaimed.

From the same nephew of the ambassador we have again this glimpse of the King at tennis.

"He was clad all in white, with white shoes too, and a straw hat of the finest on his head. He played in his doublet. He has a very good figure, he is perhaps a trifle heavy but on the whole he is well proportioned. When you see him like this, at his game, you would never imagine that he is the King."

Henri's passion was horses. He had three studs where magnificent horses were bred for him. The most important was at Oiron, with Claude de Gouffier, Seigneur de Boisy, in Anjou. That was where Diane went to ride the finest thoroughbreds. Many of her letters are dated from these places. The ciphers of the two lovers are still inscribed upon the walls. There was a gallery in which were the painted pictures of the favourite's favourite horses.

Henri was a consummate horseman, we still have the names of his pet horses, which were adorned with sumptuous trappings: gilt harness, saddle stuffed in the Mantuan fashion, or the Turkish, with plumes

stuck up on the forehead of the proud beast, between the erect ears. There was Quadragant, trained by the King to make a reverence to his master; Gonzague of the Montoire stud, haughty Mireau, trained by M. de Carnavalet, Le Bay de la Paix, that Henri rode in the camp at Amiens, Hobère, who has remained famous for his charming elegance. At Oiron the King brought up a hundred and fifty pages belonging to the best houses of France, among whom every year fifty were drafted out for the army. These young gentlemen were entrusted to the care of Carnavalet and Sipierre. It was the military academy of the period. For war was recognized as a sporting, moral, and physical necessity, a wholesome training for will and muscle, a lesson of energy and self-denial, a safety valve for the ambitions that grew heady with inaction. Campaigns opened in the spring, and went on throughout the summer. In winter the chase served for training, and tennis also. In frost there was skating on the ponds, if it rained they played billiards or fenced. A large, noble, healthy life, interspersed with reading and amorous adventures.

". . . After supper," again Giacomo Lorenzo notes, "the King went to the Queen's apartments, where there were with him the greater part of the lords and ladies, and amused himself there cheerfully for an hour."

"He is very fond of music, of which he has the best possible ideas, and nearly every day he likes to hear it either when he rises or when he goes to bed."

"I perceived that his Majesty's chief maxim is to keep war always far away from France. He spares nothing to that end, neither trouble nor cost, for he thinks that any loss at home is heavy, and the weakest suffer the most." A prudent reflection terminates this valuable description of the life of the court:

"And if nothing is more secret than the heart of man, there are in the hearts of princes depths obscurer still. Hitherto I have spoken of things heard and seen by myself, and I could therefore affirm them with certainty, but what I am now about to tell you understand it not as a fixed truth but as a conjecture more or less drawing near the truth, or indeed as a truth that may change from one moment to another, as happens with the thoughts of men."

From these testimonies we must retain a general impression, which may give us, as much as is possible, an idea of the character of those they evoke. Henri was a handsome, dignified man, full of majesty, serious, adroit, lettered and touchingly kind. So superior a woman as Diane could love him, without the thought of self-interest being the *only* motive for her attachment. They were worthy of each other, they were able to recognize one another, which calls for a judgment

rare among human beings, who generally leave the better to take the worse in a state of illusion nearer stupidity than brains. Henri was known by his contemporaries, was praised and loved by them. More than Henri IV, far more than Louis XII, he must have left a touching memory behind him to his people. He lacked a historian to fix in an invented anecdote or in some brief formula, a label easily legible and remembered, his personality in this way made popular. Failing the masses, the lettered people might still have given more ear to the verses of Ronsard, which are perhaps too beautiful to be well understood. Inscribed on the dado over which stands the portrait of one of our best kings, silent and disdaining homage, having on his side the peace of a conscience he desired to keep free from reproach, they complete the picture we can make for ourselves of the prince, the real prince of the French Renaissance.

Il fit un second Mars et le ciel l'avait fait,
Pour se montrer en guerre un monarque parfait,
Nul ne picquait si bien le long de la campagne
Ou le coursier de Naple, ou le genet d'Espagne . . .

§ §

Diane is his allegorical mate. They are, physically and morally, a marvellous pair and without doubt unique in history. She is now at the culminating point

of her life, in her uncontested power. It is in this apparent changeless noon of her glory that we ought to contemplate her, for hours of happiness are brief, and swift to fade. Her arms as they were finally constituted, enriched with all the acquisitions she had made, sum up her whole history and are the sign and seal of her sovereignty:

"Azure within an orle of eight crosses or, an escutcheon azure, bordered or, an inescutcheon argent, which is Brézé. Impaling: Quarterly 1 and 4 azure, six bezants argent, 3, 2, and 1, and a chief or, which is Poitiers Saint-Vallier. 2, azure semee of fleurs-de-lis or on a canton argent three crescents gules (for France, may we say?). 3, Per fess dancette argent and sable." In her letters she signs in a tall stately hand '*Diane*', and nothing more, knowing that no one before her or after could bear this Olympian name, of which she alone was worthy. In her discharges and receipts, omitting the name of her husband, and taking on herself all the honour and all the lustre of her house, she is

"We, Diane de Poitiers, duchesse de Valentinois et Diois, comtesse d'Albon, dame de Saint-Vallier."

Thus she has mustered and concentrated all her forces. She is more than a Queen; to herself alone she owes her glory, the crescent at its zenith awaits the

adoration of men. The poets sing of her, and du Bellay writes his cadenced rhymes:

Dieu vous a fait entre nous,
Comme un miracle apparaître
Afin que de ce grand roy,
  D'une inviolable foi,
Vous peussiez posséder l'âme,
  Et que son affection,
Par vostre perfection,
Bruslat d'une sainte flamme
Les rois monstrent aux humains
Du Dieu l'exemple et l'image . . .

And again:

Les nymphes déliennes
Les nymphes, mon soucy,
Les soeurs parnassiennes,
Et les grâces aussi
Dansent sous la clarté
De votre déité.

Ronsard himself tunes his lyre to a prelude of praise:

Seray-je seul vivant en France de vostre âge,
Sans chanter vostre nom, si craint et si puissant
Diray-je point l'honneur de vostre beau croissant,
Feray-je point pour vous quelque immortel ouvrage?

It was at this time that Léonard Limosin, the marvellous enameller, fixed for the Constable de Montmorency his picture of the court. This is the Assembly of the Gods, now to be seen in the Louvre. Around

Henri are grouped his favourite companions. The Queen is on the left, on the right a woman who may be Diane de France; Diane de Poitiers is undoubtedly represented by Venus, half nude, beside whom Love winged and subdued takes submissive refuge. This festal group is upborne on clouds, and their moments of happiness are as shining and as frail.

§ §

Before an ill wind dissipates their light and marvellous structure, let us follow over several years the course of this existence, nothing of which was left to chance, her travels, her acquisitions, her care given with almost disconcerting lucidity and perspicacity to her affairs, whether important or trifling. Her life at court, her private life, engage her attention equally, and the provincial archives and the public records help us to follow her step by step and to know her in her innermost reactions.

1550.—She is at Anet, Romorantin, Brie-Comte-Robert, Mauny, with her daughter d'Aumale, at Château-Thierry, Orléans, Blois. From Romorantin she writes to M. du Bouchage with regard to a mistake that has found its way into her wood accounts, and she keeps a careful eye on the exact yield of her leases.

But at the same time she has in mind to people the

King's Council with her satellites, for danger comes from councillors, the ones you happen to inconvenience. The example of Duprat, with Louise of Savoy, who living in the Bourbonnais enriched himself with the spoils of the Constable, has remained vividly in her mind. She has Lizet, the President of the Parliament of Paris, deposed, and puts in his place Gilles Magister, the King's advocate, an adroit courtier, who is wholly on her side. There were at court thirteen cardinals whom she feared, who in the last reign had been of preponderant power. She prevails on Henri to send them to Rome, where they will be useful to increase the French faction in the conclave. Naturally she has Montmorency recalled, and the two ministers of François I, Cardinal de Tournon and Annebaut, sent away. She has the four millions owed to the Constable, which were the cause of his downfall, repaid to him. She turned against the Chancellor, Olivier, who put obstacles in the way of the registration of her grants, and the seals were given to Bertrandi, a friend of Montmorency. She takes the funds out of the hands of the treasurer Vallée, and has them transferred to Le Blond, who is devoted to her interests. If Bordeaux revolts, it is because Henri II, at her advice, re-establishes the salt tax in that city. Montmorency will chastise the rebels harshly. She also takes the taxes on church bells,

and Rabelais will say: "The king had hung the chimes of his kingdom on the neck of his mare."

1550.—Diane, an admirable woman of orderliness and of business, kept herself well informed of everything that went on in her domains. We have (in the library of Grenoble) a whole series of documents that show this practical, intelligent side of the duchess, who busied herself with the smallest details of the administration of her estates. She had a council of lawyers sitting at Grenoble, which could follow all litigation in the Parliament and in the Chambre des Comptes. This Council occasionally delegated one of its members to make such enquiries as circumstances might call for in the manors, or to supervise the inferior officers. Reports divided into paragraphs and articles were sent to the duchess, who annotated them with her own hand, and made known her formal decision. Here are some characteristic extracts, taken from the Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie de la Drôme, contributed by M. J. Chevalier.

"What has been done for the service of Madame, in what concerns the memoranda and instructions by her given and sent hither, dated the first day of May one thousand five hundred and fifty:

"And in the first place, in the matter of religion, enquiry has been made from the officers, consuls, curés

and other notable persons of all the lands under her obedience, by whose report we have not discovered or heard that there is anyone suspected of heresy in the said lands and yet Monsieur Maître Girard Serviant, councillor of the King, who has for a long period devoted himself to the said matter of religion, says that from the enquiries he has made it will be found that there are many heretical suspects in the lands of the Duchy of Valentinois, and even in the town of Crest, as he particularly declared to M. de la Ménardière who will give a verbal report to Madame.

"As for the farm of the second article of the memoranda, Madame will have understood by what M. de la Ménardière has written of it, and also by perusing the lease that is being placed before her, what has been done with regard to this farm . . .

"As for Madame's grains, they have been examined and remeasured, and it has been found that she has from the ingathering of past years the quantity of some two thousand five hundred loads, of all grains, which it had not been thought good to sell without first informing Madame, because it is hoped that the price of the said grain will increase partly by means of trade with foreigners and partly because this year's crop is very small.

"We have spoken to M. de Mens, for the proceeds of the gabelle and the salt . . . etc.

Photograph by Giraudon

DIANE DE POITIERS AS THE WIDOW OF LOUIS DE BRÉZÉ ON HIS TOMB AT ROUEN

"As for the differences between Madame and the community of Barbentane . . . of Vallabrègues . . .

"As for the exchange of Villeneufve de Mare against the *parerie* of Pizançon held by M. de Sarsenas, it seems to be very good and useful for Madame, because by this she can make her estate of Pizançon one of the finest and most paying in Dauphiné, besides the question of sentiment which always counted largely with our forefathers, since the said Pizançon is the place where Madame's father was born and died, etc. . . .

"The legacies and good works ordered by the late Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier, Madame's brother, have been accomplished in full, and we have verified the payment of the debts of the poor girls whom the said lord gave orders to have married, etc. . . .

"Madame will be amply informed upon the lawsuits she has in the court of the Parliament of Dauphiné, by the memorandum that has been sent to her."

Diane won her case against Aleyran de Valperge, Seigneur de Sarcenas. The other part of the Pizançon estate, belonging to Catherine d'Amboise, wife of Louis de Clèves, was contested against her. Diane brought an action and recovered this other portion. Thus she was mistress of the whole seignory.

The port of la Roche de Glun, the tolls of Confolens and the seignory of Beaumont-Monteux had been sold by the Poitiers in 1543 to a certain Péronne.

By letters from L'Isle-Adam, on September 18, 1550, Henri II instructed the treasurer of his privy purse to pay 661 livres for the redemption of Roche-Glun, 1222 livres for that of Confolens and 1828 livres for that of Beaumont, in execution of a decree of the Parliament on June 17, which authorized the Comtesse de Valentinois, heiress of Guillaume de Poitiers, to recover her lands from those who had acquired them.

On January 17, 1551, we find another gift, of 5500 livres, from the King. In 1552, at the moment of the campaign of Germany, Henri, who was at Anet, gave her the duchies of Diois and Valentinois, with full and complete enjoyment of their revenues.

Here is a curious document, which perhaps excuses the complaint of the Protestants preserved by the historians to the exclusion of everything else, but which an impartial history cannot omit. This document, also communicated to the Bulletin de la Société de la Drôme, is indeed curious. "The King at the request of Mme. de Valentinois, has made a gift to André Faulcher of all and several the properties, personal and real that belonged and belong to Pierre and Joachim de la Mer, the said brothers of Demary, to the said gentleman, as adjudged and confiscated by sentence of the lieutenant of the Sénéschal of Provence at Arles, given on the ninth day of this present month of Sep-

tember (M. Ve LIII). Thus signed by Henri II by his own hand."

Why is it supposed that this André Faulcher was Diane's man of straw, to secure for herself the property of this banished gentleman? What need had she, with all her wealth, of these poor scraps at which she is accused of grasping? It is ridiculous.

From 1554 to 1559, the fortune of the Duchess increased prodigiously. Besides the King's gifts there was also her perfect management, the care she took in everything that concerned her interests. The archives of Isère preserve curious details on the affairs both great and small over which she exercised absolute control from a distance. Justice, lawsuits, discussion of rents, renewal of leases, etc., renewal of *terriers*, Diane supervised all this work from afar, recommending her agents to bring together all the ancient titles that established her rights, and enjoining upon Jean Gauthier to arrange if necessary a vaulted chamber in the Château d'Étoile, in which there might be collected charters and documents composing the archives of the Duchy of Valentinois and her other properties.

This Jean Gauthier, an old servant of Poitiers, left in his papers after his death the "Genealogy of the Comtes de Valentinois". From this we take the following interesting foreword upon the family and its origin.

". . . So to find your descent and that of your predecessors, I have read closely the Annals of Acquitaine that Jehan Bouchet has set forth. I have very often seen in old time, and have taken pleasure to see the paintings of the great hall of the old chasteau d'Estoille, called the Green Hall, in which there was a scutcheon with the arms of Acquitaine, at the top of the wall, near the roof, and which I did not know and have often seen others amusing themselves enquiring what arms those should be. Parts of the said roof fell now five years ago, and you, madame, gave commands to mend it, the which has been done. Near the said scutcheon there was another scutcheon with six silver bezants, the field azure and a chief or. With the ruin of this roof and the rain, had you not of good right placed them in your scutcheon I should not have known them, and that reminds me that it is certain that the hereafter named Comtes de Vallentinoys and Dyois were of the true descent and lineage aforesaid."

Greed? cupidity? voracity? If you please. She did well to provide for herself. Who would have said thank you to her for her discretion? Look at the Maintenon who got nothing out of her marriage with Louis XIV but a charity home for the poor daughters of the nobility, and a gold cross for herself. Has she been lauded? Read Saint-Simon again. The injustice of men incites able people to serve themselves and despise their

judgments. What did Diane get from her youth of fidelity to her old husband Brézé? Calumnies. She knows it. She profits by it. The glory of the earth is to the greedy. You must dazzle. To dazzle you need riches, to acquire riches you must take them where they are to be found. Diane was right in the logic of her life, which had no renunciation about it.

1551.—Correspondence of the municipality of Valence:

"Deliberation upon the honourable lodging of the representatives of the Duchesse de Valentinois, to whom the town shall send wine every day (March 4)."

We find her again on the way to Piedmont, for the marriage ceremony of Anne of Este and the Prince de Joinville. She has left an imperishable memory of her touching at Lyons.

"Diana hunting with her companions the forest maidens, she held in her hand a rich Turkish bow, the quiver hanging by her side, arrayed in the costume of a nymph. Her body was clad in a doublet, with six great round flounces of black cloth of gold, sown with silver stars; the sleeves and the rest of crimson satin covered with pearls and embroideries; her hair was braided with great strings of rich pearls, with quantities of precious stones and jewels of great

worth; above her forehead a little silver crescent gleaming with tiny diamonds . . ."

For a woman of fifty-one this was sufficiently bold. She needed a certainty of beauty that flung off all criticism, exposed as she was to the envious and clear-sighted eyes of a crowd always on the watch. But to the pitiless eyes of the world she presented fearlessly the pearly whiteness of her famous complexion, helped by no cosmetic, her warm flesh, braced and revivified daily by the ice-cold water in which she bathed, the Olympian serenity of her face, her tall stature and her supple limbs, kept strong and elastic by her morning rides. Her device, as set forth on the medal that represents her, is anything but false

"Omnium victorem vici"

"I conquered who conquers all." Does it mean the King? Or time? Or love? For these are the three submissive at her feet through the incomparable mastery of her intelligence and will.

These fêtes never intoxicate her. Every day she continues to keep an eye to her business.

From Plessis, on April 2, she writes to M. du Bouchage about the lawsuit she is maintaining against her sister and her nieces with regard to her brother's inheritance.

"As for what you ask me, if I want money how

much should I be satisfied with? For my part, I should have no mind to satisfy my nieces, and as for what belongs to me I should want forty thousand francs at the least; but I think the quickest way for me will be to get a decision from the Courts, which I contemplate doing after Easter, since matters stand as they do, for I have in all things behaved too strictly in accordance with my duty to have anything to do with such finesses. Only my desire for your friendship caused me to temporize until now, and to lose time . . ."

She is at Oiron on May 20.

At Blois on July 25.

She is at Amboise for the entry of Henri II. In the account book of the municipality we find among the details of expenditure as follows:

". . . In the month of June 1551, apricots, pears, cherries, morelloes, claret wine and a bouquet of pinks presented to the Cardinal d'Armagnac (p. 39). Presents to the Grand Equerry and to the Tours justices. Capendu apples and Bon Chrétien pears presented to the King, the Queen, the Constable, Madame la Grant' Sénéchalle, the Grand Master, the Maréchal de Saint-André, M. de Boisdauphin, and M. de Montmorency, and to M. des Arpentis and M. de Soissons (pp. 41 et seq.). Presents to the English embassy in June and July on its coming to Amboise and its return (p. 44), etc."

To make ready for the approaching coming of the King and the court to Chenonceaux the duchess goes to her Château on the Cher, accompanied by Maître Jehan Delorme, the brother of Philibert. She was detained on the way by an accident at Orléans, where she broke a leg. She was taken to her house in the Rue Neuve, where she lay a long time in healing. The chroniclers of the Loiret describe the accident.

". . . They (the court) halted (on the way from Chambord) at the Augustine priory, situated near the place where there was a stage or theatre erected, richly bedight, containing a great hall in which there were the King, the Queen, M. le Connétable, the Duchesse de Valentinois, and the other lords looking at the passers-by . . .

". . . It was on the way back from Sainte-Croix, where the Bishop du Châtel had preached to the court, that she almost broke her neck, her horse having stumbled with its forefoot, passing in front of Saint-Pierre on the bridge."

From Orléans she was conveyed to Blois where the King wrote to her by M. de Ménardière, the usual messenger between the lovers.

1552.—"Mamye, I entreat you to send me word of your health for the distress in which I am through hearing of your illness, to the end that according to

that I may do; for if you continue to be ill I would not fail to go to you to do my utmost to do you service, even as I am bound to do, and furthermore it would not be possible for me to live so long without seeing you; and since I was not afeared in time past to lose the good grace of the late King in order to be with you, I would spare no trouble to serve you in anything; and I assure you that I shall not be at ease until the bearer of this hath returned; and for that I entreat you to send me word in very truth how you are and when you will be able to depart. I believe that you will be well able to think how little pleasure I have at Fontainebleau without seeing you, for being far away from her on whom depends all my weal, it is full hard for me to have joy, which makes me sign this letter from fear that it may be too long and tire you to read it, and will proffer you my humble recommendations to your good grace, as he that is fain to keep it for ever.

"H."

"Madame mamye, I thank you very humbly for the pains you have taken to send me news of you, which is the most agreeable thing to me in this world, and entreat you to keep promise with me, for I cannot live without you, and if you knew how little pastime I have here you would pity me. I will not make you a longer letter, save but to assure you that I could not come as

quickly as wisheth it he who remains for ever your very humble servant.

"H."

"Meanwhile I entreat you to keep remembrance of him who never had and never knew but one God and one love, and assure you that you shall not have shame to have granted me the name of servant. Which I entreat you to keep for me for ever.

"H."

What a warm affection flows through these lines. Is it weakness, or madness, to love like this? It is courage to express it with this frank truth, it is beautiful to be able to feel so keenly. Jean Fernel cured Diane. But was it to secure better treatment that she asked the municipality of Valence to send her a doctor?

From the municipal registers, January 1552:

"At the request of the Duchesse de Valentinois, a Neapolitan doctor."

She made a slow recovery. The King went off to war against the Emperor, and the Queen and the court accompanied him as far as the frontier. For Henri nothing counted but his friend, to whom he sent these verses:

Plus ferme foi ne fut oncques jurée,
A nouveau prince, ô ma seule princesse,
Que mon amour qui vous fera sans cesse,

Contre le temps et la mort assurée.
De fosse creuse, et de tours bien murée,
N'a pas besoin de ma foi la forteresse,
Dont je vous fis dame, royne et maîtresse
Pour ce qu'elle est d'éternelle durée,
Thrésor ne peut sur elle être vainqueur
Ung si vil prix n'acquiert un gentil coeur
Non point faveur ou grandeur de lignage
Qui éblouit les yeux du populaire;
Non la beauté qu'y ung léger courage
Peut émouvoir tant que vous me peult plaire
Mes qui pourrait à moi s'acomparer,
Et si s'estyme rien que sa bonne grase.

. . . . . .

Hélas mon dieu, combien je regrette
Le temps que j'ai perdu en ma jeunesse! . . .
Combien de fois je me suis souhaité
Avoir Diane, pour ma seule maîtresse,
Mais je craignais qu'elle, qui est déesse
Ne se voulut abaisser jusque-là . . .

. . . . . .

Et je lui dis encore davantage
Que la supplie de bien se souvenir
Que n'aie joie jusques au revenir
Tant que je vois son honneste visage

. . . . . .

H.

Diane is not behindhand with love rhymes. They are a lettered pair to whom the Muses are familiar. Not being able to go to the frontier with the court,

she sends her lover the following lines about which there is no possible ambiguity.

Adieu délices de mon coeur,
Adieu mon maître et mon seigneur,
Adieu vrai estocq de noblesse.

. . . . . .

Adieu plusieurs royaults bancquets,
Adieu épicurieulx metz,
Adieu magnifiques festins,
Adieu doulx baisers colombins,
Adieu ce qu'en secret faisons
Quand entre nous deux nous jouons,
Adieu, adieu, qui mon coeur aime,
Adieu lyesse souveraine.

Coming back from escorting the King, Catherine falls ill of a quinsy. The Duchess, wholly recovered, hastens to her and nurses her devotedly.

The Pope is elected.

Metz, Toul, Verdun are won by Henri II, who extended French territory, the very opposite to his father who nearly destroyed the kingdom. It is merely a detail, no doubt, since he gets no thanks for it. Diane does not forget the interests of her own folk. She procures for her son-in-law d'Aumale, in the campaign of the East, the post of general of the artillery, and in the absence of Montmorency the chief command of the army. In July she is at Anet, where she receives the homage of her subjects in Dauphiné.

From the archives of the municipality of Valence:

"As for the very high and very puissant dame Diane de Poitiers, usufructuary of the duchies of Valentinois and Diois, they (the municipal officers) declare that they have been and desire to be her very humble and obedient servants, as being greatly obliged for having received many aids, favours, and benefits, entreating her also very humbly to continue always in her good grace to them.

July 5, 1552."

On August 27 and 30, she has joined Henri at Villers-Cotterets, where she looks after her friends. For Guise she obtains the grant of the sums he needs to repair the fortifications of Metz.

The Duke expresses his gratitude to her for this.

"I cannot but keep still in mind the particular favour you have done me, and the singular contentment I have therefrom, by doing my utmost to be able to serve you more and more, and having good hope of obtaining good fruit thereof, and not less for you than for me, even if henceforth my interests should be different from yours."

Assuredly if she holds her people, it is not only by her beauty, but by the good offices she means to them. She takes care not to neglect the forces she needs. Being the channel of the royal favours, she makes the

best use of them, and what favourite in the course of the ages ever acted otherwise? Here is yet another significant letter of this same year, to Madame de Longueval.

"Hélène my good friend, I write you this word to tell you that Lefèvre can in all safety continue the building he has undertaken in the ville Françoise (Le Hâvre), it being the King's intention to extend for three years next ensuing the exemption from taxes and aids for all those who wish to build there, provided that the value of the buildings be not too small. So be good enough to tell him this and if he needs more money I shall gladly give it him for your sake.

"Your most affectionate friend

"D".

1553.—The victories in the East are celebrated with great rejoicings. This year the Duchess marries her royal daughter, Diane de France, to Orazio Farnese, Duke de Castro, the second son of Ludovico, Duke of Parma and Piacenza. We have not succeeded in finding details of this wedding, which nevertheless must have been famous. Unhappily it was followed immediately by mourning, the young bridegroom having been killed at Thérouanne. The little widow comes back to her mother, who will presently plan a better

establishment for her. In the registers of the correspondence of the municipality of Valence we read:

"Letter from the President Gautier to the Consul Fornier, with reference to the royal lawsuits, which the Consul Eymery has presented to the States, in order that the country might undertake the defence against Madame de Valentinois, and that that lady and her council may be advised thereof." (April 3, 1553.)

Here is a very unusual tone. What has happened? Has she had trouble with her vassals? Why? The affair is soon settled, for there is another letter to President Gautier, presumably from the Consuls, assuring him that their community "has never thought of anything but for Madame's pleasure and profit, doing her all the service possible to us, as her very humble and obedient servants". (April 6, 1553.)

She is still the stronger.

She is at Saint-Germain in June 1553, from which she writes a letter to the Comte du Bouchage, who has just lost a son.

On August 14, we find her with her relatives the de Sillis at La Rocheguyon.

From the communal archives of Montélimar, on September 27, 1553:

"Deliberation on opposing the redemption of the

ground rents and royal taxes, by appealing to the Duc de Guise, the Duchesse de Valentinois, and to Maugiron, and setting forth the position of the town, completely stripped of money."

1554.—Young Montaigne is presented at court. Jacques Amyot is tutor to the princes, Henri II's sons.

On January 2, we find Diane at Montargis.

In February she returns to Anet. From there she writes to Madame de Montaygu:

"Madame my good friend, I have just been told the story of the poor young queen, Jehanne (Grey), and I could not refrain from weeping at the gentle and resigned words she uttered to them at this late execution. . . .

". . . And see well how it often befalls that to rise to the topmost degree would make it seem that the abyss is on high."

Then came to the Duchesse de Valentinois the trial of the heart that was not to be omitted from her total experience of life. She fell ill at Anet and begged the King to go to Saint-Germain while she was recovering. Was it that she did not wish to let him see her in a condition of physical inferiority? Probably. The Queen then tried to tear Henri away from the favourite. Inaugurating her strange system of temptation, which she was to resume later with her sons, she made six

girls dance and recite verses before the King. Among the most beautiful were Miss Fleming, Clarissa Strozzi, a lovely Italian in her suite, and Miss Lewiston, a maid of honour to Mary Stuart. So much fresh youth no doubt stirred Henri, and he fell into the trap set by his wife. He chose Miss Fleming, and had by her a son who was Henri de Valois, Comte d'Angoulême, Grand Prior of France. Diane knew all the details of the adventure, and took care not to be annoyed. As soon as she was cured, lovelier than ever she came back to the court and took possession of her lover's heart once more. He had merely yielded to a passing fancy, and returned to her completely.

§ §

We have followed the Grant' Sénéchalle step by step during these few years to get to know her in her most vivid innermost reactions. Attentive by turns to the immediate entourage of the King, she makes and unmakes ministers. Careful of her interests, the greatest and the smallest alike, she captures favours and keeps watch over her possessions, neglecting nothing either near at hand or far away. An amorous lover, she can write the verses we have seen; affectionate, she sympathises with the griefs of others, deducing the great lesson of the vanity of the greatness to which she is no dupe. She knows how to pardon and how to

remember, she keeps absolute mastery over her life, in those days full of activities and through all those constant travels always at hand, and taking up the reins again when sickness has forced her to be away. She is now fifty-five. She rides like a girl in her teens, and dances the galliard in a way to fill the maids of honour and the Dauphiness herself with envy. Her party is strong, her family well established, she is ever the ornament of the court and the dread of her enemies lying in ambush against her. This sovereignty obliges her to maintain almost royal expenditure. She only keeps her place at the cost of insensate luxury; around Henri she creates an atmosphere of fairydom, of which she remains the irradiant centre. It is possible to prefer a saint in homespun, but from the moment that she entered upon this path of domination her demands and needs must have been greater and greater. Everything drove her to it, and her enemies above all. Henri II loaded her with gifts. But what king did not do the same to his favourites? At any rate the treasury showed no sign of suffering from it, and we do not see in his reign those difficulties entailing tragic consequences that brought the previous reign within a hair's-breadth of ruin. No borrowings, as there were under François I. What Henri gives his mistress and his friends is less burdensome to the nation than what his father allowed to be taken from

him by everybody, and by his mother above all the rest. Still it was natural that those whose hopes were disappointed should complain. A quatrain of the period expresses it:

> Sire, si vous laissez, comme Charles désire,
> Comme Diane veut, par trop vous gouverner,
> Tondre, pétrir, mollir, refondre, retourner,
> Sire vous n'êtes plus, vous n'êtes plus que cire.

The Protestants especially showed themselves bitter in their hate. They pretended that it was with their confiscated property that the favourite was growing rich. The repression of which they were victims was due more to a political necessity than to any need for money. From 1547 to 1555 the reformation spread considerably. The King, persuaded on just ground that the religious revolution was big with menace for the royal power, saw himself obliged to behave with great harshness. He set up the *chambre ardente*, instructed to pass rigid judgments. There was even a question of setting up the Spanish Inquisition in France. In two years there were four hundred and thirty-nine sentences for heresy, and sixty executions. Intolerance was equal in both parties, and to be fair we should have to quote on the other side the crimes of the reformers, and their criminal exploits. Diane, Montmorency, and Guise led the campaign of uncompromising reaction. That is why the favourite found

the hatred of the victims falling upon her. They tell (but it is a Protestant story) how Henri II having conceived the idea of himself questioning one of these fanatics, whom he would have liked to bring to reason, had him brought to the Louvre. Pierre du Châtel, the bishop, questioned him. Diane took it on herself to interpose a word:

"Be content," said the poor wretch, "with having infected France, without mingling your filth with a thing so holy as religion."

The King in fury said he would go to see him burn. He kept his word. The condemned man at the stake gazed at him so steadfastly that he was constrained to retire.

That shows, if we accept the tale as true, to what degree hatred against the Duchess had risen, and how well conducted was the campaign by which her memory was to remain for ever stained. She cared nothing for it. Upholding Catholicism and tradition, a Frenchwoman who felt the foreign danger under these semblances of creeds, she despised attacks and carried on reprisals. A good mother, a good friend, a good counsellor, if we judge to-day by all the troubles the reformation was to bring about in the coming years, she knew how to be generous and magnificent when occasion called for it.

Brantôme, who is not much inclined to be indulgent where she is concerned, will be able to write:

"The people of France ought to pray that henceforth there may never come a King's favourite worse or more maleficent than this one."

She is faithful to her own formula of life. Luxurious, magnificent, at any rate what she took she transformed into beauty. She acquired and exacted, not to keep, but to distribute. She was a beautiful round arch, under which the waters of the royal river flowed abundantly, fertilizing the soil with its silt so rich in splendour.

CHAPTER VI

Under the Sign of the Crescent

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Under the Sign of the Crescent

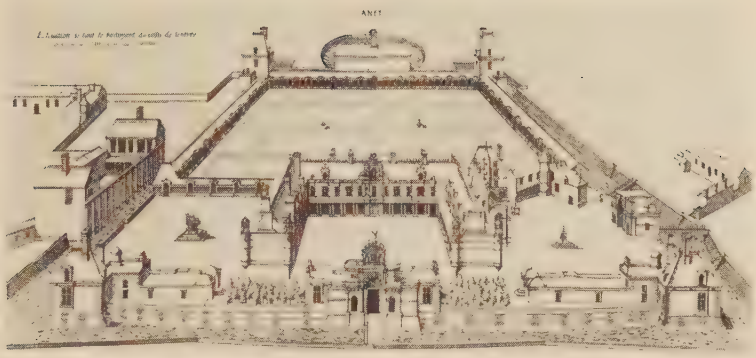
Anet

THIS power to transmute is the one thing that excuses the greed of those who are possessors. Avaricious grabbers, those who bury the penny they have been given to keep, are accursed, as we know. To give to all what one alone gave deserves praise more than blame. Gold ought to circulate. It bears life on its back. Let life be more beautiful and lo! the gold is blessed. Be life more sombre, then the gold is deadly. On the pediment of that beautiful home, Anet, which has remained, among all that Diane possessed, the most perfectly worthy to enframe her face, can be read the formula of her sumptuous and generous life.

> *Phoebo sacrata est almae domus ampla Dianae,*
> *Verum accepta uni cuncta Diana refert.*
> Phoebus dedicated this majestic dwelling to the beneficent
> Diana, who brings him all that she received.

Anet embodies her whole life as woman, wife, mother, lover, queen. It was the old manor of the Brézés, whose ancient race was mingled with the blood

of kings. Philippe-Auguste in 1222 made Anet his favourite abode. Simon d'Anet had given it to the King as the price of his help against Henry the Second of England; Louis VIII, Louis IX, Philippe le Hardi, Charles V, all visited and were charmed by it. It was in December 1444 that Charles VII, in gratitude for the services rendered to him by Pierre de Brézé, Seigneur de la Varenne, his chamberlain, who helped him to drive out the English, invested him with the seigniories of Nogent-le-Roi, Anet, Breval and Monchauvet. Pierre was succeeded by Jacques, and by Louis, Diane's husband. There she lived through the peaceful, chaste years of her youth. It was their family mansion, where the king and his court came to visit them as friends. The archives contain a great number of documents of the years 1527, 28, 31, 38, 40, 43, edicts, correspondence of François I. There were born the daughters of the Sénéchal, there he died, laden with the King's favour. Immediately after his death Diane must needs save her home from the greed of the Duchesse d'Étampes, who claimed Anet as a royal domain. The suit went on until the death of the King, who it must be said showed no great vigour in upholding the unjust claims of his mistress. From the accession of Henri II Anet fell completely to his lady, who devoted all her care to embellishing it. Even during the last years of François I, whose end was clearly at



PLAN OF CHATEAU D'ANET
By Ducerceau, Bibliothèque Nationale

CHATEAU D'ANET
Gravure de Rigaud, Bibliothèque Nationale

Photograph by Giraudon
DETAIL OF BALUSTRADE AT
CHATEAU D'ANET WITH THE
MONOGRAM OF DIANE

hand, Philibert Delorme began the works. He spent ten years in carrying them to an end. In 1547 was executed the decorative woodwork, done by Sibec de Carpi. Soon a great number of articles and quantities of materials were brought from Paris for its adornment, sent by Henri II, who wished to make it the shrine and casket of his love. M. Maurice Roy points out two contracts made in the name of the Duchesse de Valentinois by Philibert Delorme with a certain Nicolas Prunier, a carrier by water, living in the Rue de Jouy. The first of these contracts is dated February 20, 1552; it mentions fifteen great bales, long, square or round. Eight small bales, twelve pictures. A portrait of Mgr. d'Angoulême (no doubt Henri's natural son). The second contract is dated September 3, 1552, and relates to the carriage of forty-three pieces of black marble and other pieces of red porphyry, a coffer lined with satin, in which was the famous salamander, a precious jewel seized from the Duchesse d'Étampes, bales of books, and the twelve apostles by Léonard Limosin.

The King also lent his workmen. The royal arsenal was responsible for the casting of the great stag and the dogs destined to crown the fine portico of the entrance. Philibert Delorme had ordered these bronzes from the caster Benoist le Boucher, on June 1, 1555; Jehan Nicole the fountain maker, who lived at Anet,

proceeded to the laying of the pipes (1553-1554) for the famous fountain.

It is from Delorme's wonderful treatise on architecture that we shall take the details about the château, which was his masterpiece. His language is too delightful to change a word of it. Only the length of his descriptions will make us abridge or condense the details.

On his arrival the main body of the château, including the façades of the back of the courtyard and the gardens, was already partly erected. He proceeded to various works of restoring and consolidation, applying to the old walls projecting pillars and sculptured motives. He took as collaborators Sibec de Carpi, joiner; François Carmoy of Orléans, sculptor, and his brother Charles, the painter; Bertrand Deulx, stonecutter; Jehan Nicole, master fountain-maker. The château was composed of three wings, a great gatefront occupying the fourth side, with the gallery of one storey. To the right of the court of honour, behind the entrance, there was another court with the chapel standing out at an angle; to the left another court in the middle of which stood the wonderful fountain. The whole in subordination to the first principal laid down by the master of the work.

"The architect must have perfect knowledge of the four quarters of the globe, and the winds that blow

THE FOUNTAIN OF DIANA AT ANET

Musée du Louvre, Les archives photographiques d'art et d'histoire

from each, so as to place his house in proper fashion and arrange it for the health of the inmates and the preservation of the stores of the household."

One detail, on which Delorme prides himself most of all, is the famous *trompe*, which he invented and which he describes with gusto.

". . . to describe and set forth the lines of the *trompe* at Anet, the château of the late Duchesse de Valentinois, which *trompe* was constructed to solve a difficulty, in order to arrange a cabinet along with the chamber in which the (late) King Henri lodged when he was at the said château. . . .

". . . For after the hall was the antechamber, then the King's chamber and beside it at right angles the cloak room.

". . . It is necessary and more than reasonable to accompany the chambers of kings, and of great princes and lords, with a cabinet (that they may be able to withdraw into their own privacy).

". . . Now what happened? My eye fell upon an angle near the King's chamber on the outside, in the garden, and it seemed an excellent device to make in the angle a hanging vault . . . which was done, and this was the vault in form of a *trompe*. . . .

". . . It seems to me that the name *trompe* which we are here using came or was taken and derived from the likeness of the structure to a trumpet."

"I will now set before you furthermore the design of the principal door of the Château of Anet, which is of the Doric order, adorned with four pillars based on the banks and slopes of the wall of the moat. The said door is flanked by two other small doors like posterns, and the whole entrance made of Vernon stone, enriched with marble, porphyry, serpentine, panels for carving. The metopes that are between the triglyphs, those over the arch of the door, are made of black marble; all the clusters of leaves and fruits are bronze between the triglyphs, and very well wrought. The Diana, with the stags, wild boars, and other animals that you see above the door are made of bronze and brass. At the sides, over the small doors, are terraces enriched around with panels for carving, being black marble, with their strapwork, instead of the balustrades that are usually placed upon terraces to lean upon. You may see above the great door at the highest point an ornament made of fine Vernon stone and black marble, with panels for carving. In this same spot is a clock dial to mark and show the hours inside the Château and also outside, also with a face and figure of an astrolabe and planisphere with its zodiac, accompanied by the twelve signs and the daily movement of the moon, as also of the planets. Besides the two hour dial faces there is a chime, which sounds before the hours, half-hours and quarters, the baying

of four hounds instead of the quarter-bells, seeming to bay against a stag, which is set up above the said clock faces. And inasmuch as it is the nature of the stag to strike with his foot when he hears the baying of the dogs, it has been so wrought that after the said dogs have sounded the chimes for the hours, the stag strikes with his foot and sounds the hours."

"I likewise caused to be made at the Château of Anet, among many fine works, a stairway in the shape of a crescent, which stands in the garden in front of the crypto-porticus to go up to the terrace and above the said crypto-porticus, to go to the garden pavilion."

This cryptoporticus contained several low galleries, upon the walls of which were painted allegorical figures: a woman representing the lands of Anet, with three towers on her head, holding a heronry in her hand, her car being drawn by a stag. Another represented the King seated in a triumphal chariot drawn by a lion and a sheep.

A third was Diane holding a golden apple and a torch. These pictures—according to Maurice Roy—were by Charles Carmoy, who took his inspiration from the poet Pontus de Thyard.

A great gallery ran the whole length of the main wing. Near the King's apartment was a little cabinet (the *trompe* Delorme talks of) eight feet wide, with

a parquet floor of maple and inlay work of several colours. The room was fitted with walnut panelling with fillets of coloured woods, each panel displaying the devices of the King and Diana. Above the chimney was an open imperial crown, enriched with crescents of fleurs-de-lis, and devices.

Sibec let into the upper panelling of the two oratories the famous enamels of Léonard Limosin preserved in the Church of Saint Pierre at Chartres. The artist was paid 200 livres 10 sols tournois in 1547, and they were delivered to Henri at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

"Who at the same instant made a gift of them in a certain quarter, which he does not wish here to declare."

In the roofs were intermingled the arms of Brézé, the *H* of the King and Diane's crescent.

When the château was finished the next thing was to furnish it sumptuously. According to a contract of January 21, 1553, Diane ordered from Robert Mestays, the King's embroiderer, eight pieces of embroidery "on a field of crimson-brown velvet all filled with arabesques."

For the royal dais Diane undertook to furnish the cloths of silver and of superfine gold and silks. The master ironworker, Mathurin Don, in July, prepared the supports of the terraces, Guillaume de Saint-Jorre,

the master pavior of the city of Paris paved the court with stone flags. The church of Anet, attached to the château, was in the form of a Greek cross, the roof of the porch painted with the three theological virtues on a ground of gold. On the door of carved wood the inevitable *H* and *D*. The pavement was of white and black marble representing a series of crescents. Inside was seen the set of Jean Goujon's twelve apostles, and figures of children carrying the attributes of the Passion. On the pendentives likewise eight draped female figures. On the door of the pulpit the arms of France and those of the duchess. The church was consecrated by Pierre Laval, Bishop of Séez. The gardens were also the object of extreme luxury. On March 30, 1552, and on May 20, 1553, the King made the Duchesse de Valentinois a gift of 150 great trees taken from the forest of Dreux. Many were Diane's acquisitions for the enlarging of her park. On February 4, 1546, she bought from Jehanne Bourges the wife of Antoine Blanchisson, gentleman steward to Mgr. the Dauphin, an arpent of meadow land. On the following 12th of May, she added to her domain "a property containing several houses". On August 29, 1548, another walled garden. There was an orangery, and Philibert Delorme erected in the park, beside the river, two little pavilions.

". . . Where the players of cornets and trumpets

and other instruments might be placed to give pleasure to the King and the princes when they were in the said park."

Anet was a temple, the temple Diane erected to herself, that she might be paid the worship she desired. This self-worship is indispensable to whosoever wishes complete success. No man praises us unless we first praise ourselves. The temple also of her love, at least of the love she wishes to have. She is everywhere present, not in effigy, but in symbol. For her mortal image she substitutes that of the goddess, whose virtues she desires to have confused with her own. Mellin de Saint-Gelais consecrated this distich to the clock at Anet.

> Cur Diana oculis labentes subjicit horas?
> Ut sapere adversis moneat, felicibus uti.

On the chime of the clock these words were engraved:

> DIANAE PICTAV VALENTINAE DUCISSAE
> JUSSU CONFLATUM—10. MART. 1554.

Everywhere is her name, her sign, her memory, raising herself above temporary and fleeting humanity to entrust to enduring stone her personality freed from the bondage of time. Along the roof ridge ran her celestial ensign, a crest of crescents. The knocker was a crescent upon a triangle. The locks displayed the royal arms with crescents. The main entrance had

three tiers of pillars of the three orders, surmounted by a triple ornamental motive with the arms of Diane and Henri. But to emphasize clearly that her liaison had come after her widowhood, and that her faithfulness to her husband, the master of this house, had remained unbroken, the statue of the Seneschal occupied the place above the door with this inscription:

"To Brézé, the most grateful Diane, his wife, erected this monument, that the memory of her husband might endure."

On the floors, on the wainscoting, the arms and the initials of Henri and Diane. It was the volume of her life, written in marble, in stone, in costly woods. Here we see an arrow piercing two entwined olive branches.

Sola vivit in illo
Alone she lived in him.

There, a crescent with the device

Donec totum impleat orbem
Until it fill the whole world.

There again, a javelin with the legend

Consequitur quodcumque petit
She attains everything she aims at.

The tapestries on the walls reproduced fragments of the history of the divine patroness of the place. Latona turning the peasants into frogs. Diana slaying

the hunter Orion. Diana rescuing Iphigeneia. The death of Meleager. And so on.

The stables were the finest in France; the aviaries the best equipped. The heronries, the store-room, the kennel, the leopard-cage were all famous. And lastly there was a considerable library. The most precious book of all, which Diane kept there as the very code of her life, was *les Enseignements de Anne de France à sa fille Suzanne*, left behind in his headlong flight by the Constable, seized by François I and by him presented to the pupil of the great daughter of Louis XI. There was also to be seen there a collection of famous hunting books. The catalogue of these was drawn up in 1774 and published by the firm of Gourdain.

The most celebrated artists worked at Anet: Pierre Lescot, Primaticcio, Cellini, Jean Goujon. It is true that the money confiscated from the Protestants paid the bills, and the proceeds of the sale of the Spanish slaves, which Diane had procured for herself, as appears from the letter to her cousin de Charlus, dated from Fontainebleau, August 28, 1556. Money must needs come from somewhere. The source matters little, according to the morals of the world, only its use interests us.

The King adored Anet, and came there continually.

A great number of his edicts are signed from there. Philibert Delorme wrote:

"What I did at Anet was by the orders of the King, who was more anxious to know what was done there than in his own houses. This was all he cared about."

The receptions the Duchess gave here have remained famous. A few lines in a letter from Sir William Pickering, the English Ambassador to France, addressed from Poissy, on March 22, 1553, to the Council of the Kingdom, give us an idea of them.

"I started for the Court, then at Anet, a wonderful fair and sumptuous house belonging to Madame Valentinois, thirteen leagues from Poissy. . . . After my audience with the King Madame Valentinois commanded that collation (as they term it) should be prepared for me in a gallery, and that afterwards I should see all the commodities of the house, which were so sumptuous and prince-like as ever I saw."

A letter from François the Dauphin, dated November 13, 1550, also gives us some further idea.

"Being with my King and my cousin de Valentinois, I shall not fail to tell them also the pleasure we had at Ennet, where we paid a visit, seeing so fine a house, goodly gardens, galleries, aviaries, and many other excellent and fine things, and I never slept better than in a great bed in which I lay in my King's chamber."

Gabriel Syméon to the Provost of Paris, dated from Anet, April 28, 1554.

"Madame de Valentinois makes great cheer to everybody, and has always entertained in feast and great rejoicing the King, the Queen and the rest of the heroes. . . . The King rode yesterday so hotly after a stag, which he did not take, that he was ill this morning and dined retired in his chamber, and Madame made a feast in her garden to Messieurs the Cardinals of Lorraine and Alby, Vendome and Monsieur the Constable."

The poets exercised their poetic fervour on Anet. The honour rests with the epistle Henri II wrote to Catherine, who had remained at Saint-Germain for her lying-in.

Here is Saint-Gelais rhyming pen in hand, in 1548.

S'il vous souvient Madame d'avoir leu,
En quelque livre élégant et eleu,
Le dessein rare et la description,
De quelque bien beau en perfaiction,
Je vous supplie ymaiginer et croire,
Que c'est d'Anet, le portrait et l'histoire,
Et estimer encor en ce faisant
Qu'il vous seroit à le veoyr plus plaisant
Qu'à le penser, d'aultant que la nature,
Passe tout art et toute conjecture
Etc. . . . . .

Joachim du Bellay in his *Regrets* is better inspired, but not less laudatory:

De vostre Dianet—de votre nom j'appelle,
Vostre maison d'Anet—la belle architecture,
Les marbres animés, la vivante peinture,
Qui la font estimer des maisons la plus belle.
Les beaux lambris dorés, la luisante chapelle,
Les superbes donjons, la riche couverture,
Le jardin tapissé d'éternelle verdure,
Et la vive fontaine à la source immortelle.

Montrait une édifice en dépense admirable
Etc. . . . . .

Olivier de Magny continues the series of eulogistic poems.

Toujours Phoebus à son reveil,
Alors que d'un pourpre vermeil,
Le sommet des monts il redore,
Redore ce jardin encore.
Quoy que l'architecte savant,
Ne l'ayt faict asseoir au levant,
Car tant de vertus il admire,
De la dame de ce jardin
Qu'aussitôt qu'il sort au matin,
Il ne faut jamais d'y reluire
Cettuy la qui l'a divisé,
Là de parterres composé
Où plusieurs armes il a mises
Et plusieurs chiffres et devises
Le tout en herbe si bien feint

Qu'on dirait presque qu'il est peint.

. . . . . .

Ici veoid-on un grand croissant,
De peu à peu se remplissant
Et là, en même apparence
L'escusson des armes de France.

This glory ought to have consoled the duchess for the attacks of the envious. She justifies the greed of which she is accused. Without it, could she ever have realized this unique result? Virtue does not command these abundances, and if its worth is of a different quality the world does not recognize its merits. Diane loves Anet with strong preference. On her return from her incessant travels, directly she can relax her watch upon the King, she hastens to her château, to her books, to her gardens. As often as possible she invites the court to come thither, and keeps her lover there to feast him, to glorify him, above all to suggest to him the idea of *Her*, as it is essential that he must see her, not as a creature perishable and subject in spite of everything to decay, but in the eternal youth of her symbol and of her beauty.

Chenonceaux

We cannot describe all Diane's homes. There are too many of them. Some have disappeared. Not all of them had the same importance, the same significance for her, or for us. After Anet, Chenonceaux, which

remains alive in its ancient shape, keeps the memory of her who loved it, and dreamed of making it too a delectable spot.

To keep Henri, she had to create a magic circle of which she was the enchantress. Near all the places the court visited Diane planned to have a house that would allow her to draw the King to it, so as to maintain her influence at its height. But was not that his wish as well as hers? He wrote to her that he could not live far away from her, and that everything seemed dull to him when she was not there.

Chenonceaux had been acquired by François I, in 1535. Thomas Bohier and Catherine Briçonnet his wife had transformed the old mill of the Marques into a delightful château whose elaborate façade rose above the bank of the Cher. This Bohier had been, with Briçonnet, his father-in-law, and Beaune Semblançay, the wealthy patrons and protectors of the arts in Touraine. They even rivalled the King, whose usual creditors they were. We know how the master behaved to them. Not being able to repay them, he executed them. The Constable, Saint-Vallier, Semblançay, found out the cost of having obliged their prince. Bohier, being implicated in one of those obscure affairs the truth about which will never be known, thought it prudent to avert the royal justice from himself, by spontaneously presenting François, by way of

compounding for debts (real or fictitious), with his estate of Chenonceaux, which the King admired. Better to give than to allow it to be seized. On May 28, 1535, Philibert Babou de la Bourdaisière took possession of it in the name of his master. There was then nothing of a house beyond the tower of the Marques and the front on the left bank of the Cher. On the fine fireplace of the guard-hall ambitious Bohier had written

S'il vient à point m'en souviendra.

King François went there frequently to hunt. There in 1536 was held the marriage of James Stuart and Madeleine of France. In 1538, after the truce of Nice, François was again there with Queen Eleanor, the Duchesse d'Étampes, the Dauphin Henri, and the Grant' Sénéchalle.

On December 12, 1539, Charles V came to hunt. Diane had a mind to this gem, and had only to desire it, it was hers on the death of François. Bernard de Rutie, Abbot of Pont-Levoy, took possession of it on July 1, 1547, in the name of the Duchesse de Valentinois. Honorat the chief warden handed over the keys according to the usual custom. The officers drew up a report and made a rapid inventory of the château.

This sheer and absolute gift was not without a certain risk for the future. The estate had been given to

François I by Bohier, in a moment of fear, to liquidate a debt that was rather the King's than his. Might not the heirs reappear some day and prove the non-validity of such a relinquishment? And did not the domain thus sequestrated furthermore belong to the Crown? King Henri's children might one day set up the nullity of an arbitrary gift. Here is where Diane's prudence and cleverness appear.

Antoine, the son of Thomas Bohier, still owed 90,000 livres of this famous debt. Henri most opportunely recollected his rights, and demanded immediate payment. As Antoine had not got the money, Chenonceaux was put up for sale, the free (and no doubt illegal) gift of it being annulled. After a number of fictitious bids Diane bought it back for 50,000 livres, which she ostensibly paid to the King, who reduced the Bohier debt by that amount. By this comedy Chenonceaux once more became private property, acquired by a private person, and was immune from any possible future resumption by the royal family. This trick was played in 1556, the court being at Amboise, very anxious about the health of Luigi Alamanni, who died at the Clos Lucé on April 18. Philibert Delorme, who was finishing Anet, was given charge of the improvements of the new seat. On June 10, 1557, Henri signed a gift of fifty trees from the forest of Montrichard, "to our very dear and well beloved cousin, Diane de Poi-

tiers, Duchesse de Valentinois, to build and construct a bridge she intends to make at her house of Chenonceaux, on the river Cher".

The bridge had five arches, the piers being round and in the shape of towers, making circular rooms within. One storey stood up above the bridge, and was to carry a balcony facing south. The masons came from Tours, from Blois, from Paris. The stones were taken from Bourré, from Montrichard, from Lussault, and the work came to 9,000 livres. As payment the Duchess had the abbeys of Saint Eloi, Noyon, Ivry, given to Philibert Delorme.

The masterpiece of the place was what has survived under the name of 'Diane's gardens'. They consist of a square of two hectares on the banks of the Cher. It is surrounded by moats, formed of a grass bank and broad ditches flanked by walls, held up by pillars of masonry. Terraces look down on the gardens from the four sides. Two transversal alleys intersect in the middle, cutting them into four triangles, divided into geometrical compartments. In the midst there was a fountain with a water-jet, executed by Cardin de Valence, a fountain maker of Tours. A bridge joined the alleys with the court of the château. The general management of the work had been entrusted to Benoit Guy, sieur de Carroys, the major domo of Bernard de Rutie, the representative of the

CHÂTEAU DE CHENONCEAUX, GIVEN TO DIANE DE POITIERS BY HENRY II

Les Archives photographiques d'art et d'histoire

Duchess. The gardener was Charlot Guérin. Diane's secretary, Geoffroy Lopin, carried on all correspondence and transmitted orders.

As soon as the new acquisition of the grand mistress of the Kingdom was known, everyone hastened to fill it with gifts. The two archbishops of Tours, Étienne de Brézé and Simon de Maillé, sent their treasures from the gardens of Vernon; Jehan de Selves, abbé of Turpenay, sent the finest cuttings from his trees, about 200, Jehan Babou de la Bourdaisière presented 13,000 plants of aubergines, and hazels to make the hedges; 150 elms from Nozai; 6 peach trees, 300 Paradise apples, 8 bundles of currants, 100 musk rose trees, lily bulbs, 9,000 strawberry plants and violets. The warren was arranged with paths and green bowers. A "*paille-maille*" was laid out for tennis and for tilting at the ring; 150 mulberry trees were planted for silkworm breeding. The Duchess, still always clad in white and black, wore nothing but silk, and made Henri and Catherine wear the first silk stockings, which had come from Italy.

The Renaissance is the time of the coming of gardens. The art had come out of Italy with Passolo Mercoliano who designed those of Blois and Amboise for Anne of Brittany and Charles VIII. From that time the castles, discarding their feudal grimness, sur-

rounded themselves with broideries of greenery and many colours. Olivier de Serres, in his *Ménage des champs* will sing of their beauty, Bernard Palissy will describe it still better in his *Dessein d'un jardin delectable*, for which Chenonceaux gave him his model. The splendour of the apartments, the sheen of the new tapestries, untarnished by dust, the richness of the enamels, the bright work of chased gold and silver, were all continued in the landscape enframed by the tall windows. Marot was the bard of this garden on the Cher, no doubt forgetting for a moment his resentments against the Duchess.

. . . . . .

Tous arbres sont en ce lieu verdoyants,
Petits ruisseaux y fuient undoyans.
Toujours faisans autour des prèz herbus
Un doulx murmure . . .

. . . . . .

Les voustes furent à merveille
Ouvrées souverainement
Par Priapus les fit de treille
De feuilles de vigne et sarment.

. . . . . .

Marguerites, lys, oeilletz,
Passevelouz, roses, flairantes,
Romarins, boutons, vermeilletz,
Lavandes odoriférantes,

Toutes autres fleurs apparentes
Jectans odeur trés adoulcie
Qui jamais au coeur ne soucie
(*Le temple de Cupido*)

The Abbé Chevalier, who wrote a remarkable history of Chenonceaux, has also published its archives. Through the aridity of the documents Diane appears to us in living guise, with her clear-cut precise mind, her masterful authority, and her lavishness, when it was a question of beautifying or improving her estate. She maintained a whole population of artists and artisans, whose efforts she spurred on and to whom she suggested ideas. The inspirer of an epoch, on which she set the mark of her style, she was its sovereign directress. The discipline of her own life passed to those she employed to coöperate in the realization of an unequalled beauty.

This historian of the Château nevertheless displays a certain partiality, and under the influence of the judgments of the favourite's enemies, he comes very near a wrong interpretation of all these doings. For instance he expresses his surprise to find Diane refusing to pay a certain Bereau who had been in charge of the making of the parterres. But had this Bereau perhaps abused her generosity? The details of the quarrel are lost to us. With her secretaries Diane constantly reviewed the accounts of her domains, and nothing es-

caped her. As clearheaded as any auditor she reduced them to their correct proportions, without meanness, but without any weakness. Would she have done better to let herself be robbed? We need only see how the world mocks at the generous and unselfish, whom constant easy indulgency brings to ruin. They are overwhelmed with contempt. But envy scarifies the others. It is at any rate profitable to them. Happy are those who deserve it. Such is the lesson of life.

The Abbé—who as a good Catholic ought to have been less amenable to Protestant insinuations—is astonished also not to find a record of charitable alms during the famous famine of 1557. But elsewhere we find Diane sufficiently sensitive to the distress of others to lead us to understand that if alms find no place in these registers it is because they were not entered there, as being part of her personal expenditure, like her toilette. Her stewards had nothing to do with them.

"She was," says Brantôme, "a charitable person, a great giver of alms, very devout, and inclined to God, and in especial a very good Catholic, greatly hating those of the reformed religion. That is why they have hated her exceedingly and slandered her".

Diane loved Chenonceaux, and stayed there a great many times, alone or with the King and the court. There she went over her lands on horseback, or in her slung chariot, tilted at the ring, and treated the

country with special favour. She had wine sent from Touraine to her other homes. It was André Pussenille or Robinet of Amboise who was her official sculptor. Mathurin de Cosse, a goldsmith of the same place, made her jewels.

She continually added to her domain as we have seen, which has brought us to observe to what extent property was split up in the sixteenth century, and even earlier, contrary to what the apologists for the Revolution would have us believe. Peasants, journeymen, labourers, winedressers, artisans, owned the whole of the *territoire roturier*. The lower orders had very free access to rural property, the soil was as much divided as it is to-day and it was from quite small folk that Diane had to buy the pieces of land with which she enlarged her estate.

We have seen her in 1552 preparing to receive the King and the Queen. In 1556 her representative Bernard de Rutie died, and she replaced him by her nephew Louis de Brézé, the Bishop of Meaux.

At Chenonceaux took place the last fête at which Henri II was present, given on the occasion of the marriage of Elizabeth with Philip II of Spain and of Marguerite with Philibert of Savoy.

§ §

The neighbourhood of Chenonceaux gave a new lease of life to Amboise, which had been abandoned during the previous reign for Chambord. But the château on the Cher was still too far away from her lover for the Duchess. She wished to possess a house nearer still. She bought the vineyards on the slope behind the château, meaning to build herself a house there. On May 16, 1556, Diane became the owner of the Châtelliers. A visitor of last century has left us the following interesting commentary of this project.

"Along the garden there is a rather long pavilion of only a single storey, it communicates with the big tower, and was joined to the Gallery of Louis XII. This building belongs to the reign of Henri II. We still find on the face of the chimneys as well as his cipher that of Diane de Poitiers entwined with it. This lodging was intended for the children of this King. Its construction, which no doubt was rendered hasty by necessity, threw out the general plan of the garden, which, adorned the whole way round by trellises painted in different colours, and cabinets of similar construction, was to have been terminated by a peristyle, the elevation of which would have afforded a handsome perspective. This enclosure ended in a terrace, in those days of the civil wars. It was also shut in by a simple terraced wall, and in the Chamber of Accounts there is still to be seen the plan of

Henri II to erect a palace for Diane de Poitiers on the levelled space on the other side of the ditch. The same garden would have served to beautify both houses and there was to be planted an extensive park on the slope that would have joined on to the promenades of the Châtelliers."

The plan was not carried out owing to the premature death of the King.

§ §

If we add to these sumptuous seats, which were Diane's favourites, Fontainebleau, which she enlarged in 1550, the hôtels in Paris: the hôtel Barbette, which came from the ancestors of Brézé, another opposite the Tournelles, which had belonged to the Duchesse d'Étampes; a third presented to her by M. Blondel de Rocquencourt, in gratitude for his nomination through her as trésorier général. If we think of Limours, of Saint-Vallier, of Sérignac, Étoille, etc., in Dauphiné, we are staggered by such riches. She was past question the most sumptuous person in Europe. This inherited and acquired wealth earned her the hatred of the envious. It also won her their respect. Her intelligence and her beauty would not have ensured her glory. Her luxury gave it her. So she did right, since she loved to shine, to make provision for herself. Diane was full of life, Diane was a pagan god-

dess. Her temple had solid foundations, and she was right, for the assaults she endured were fierce but unavailing. The head of her race, which had from the beginning been acquisitive and ambitious, she perfected its greatness and brought its destiny to fulfilment. Born with the external signs of sovereignty she remained faithful to its forms. Anywhere but in the first rank it would have been a crying scandal for her to be. She usurped no one's place, for no one would have known as she did how to occupy the space she decided to occupy. It is not everything to want, we must also know whether what we want may also be suitable for us. It is not everything to be born noble and of great fortune, we must by the sequel deserve that nobility and that fortune. With the help of her husband she repaired her father's imprudence, she succeeded in disposing of the Duchesse d'Étampes, bringing the Queen to submission, bending her rivals, serving her friends, and being served by them in just reciprocity. Her alliances she chose herself. She divined the ambitiousness of the Guises, and joined them to herself. But to have friends is not everything. We must know how to keep them, there is the rock of danger.

Montmorency, as we have seen, was linked with the Seneschal. He remained in close relation with Diane, and with the Dauphin, which earned him ban-

ishment, a more plausible reason than his supposed love for Queen Eleanor. When Henri II came to the throne, he was brought back into affairs and directed the kingdom. Nevertheless the influence of the Duchess gave him umbrage, and forgetting his friendship he planned to get rid of her. He became the queen's ally, as we know from the letter of a Venetian ambassador, one of those who have an ear at every keyhole.

"This hostility dates from the day when Madame the Duchess perceived that the Constable had plotted to turn the King from his passion for her by making him fall in love with the governess of the little Queen of Scotland, a very pretty little lady. The matter even went so far that this governess became with child by the King. Madame complained exceedingly of this, and the King had much ado to excuse himself, and for a long time the Constable and Madame did not speak to one another. At last, at His Majesty's insisting, they made peace in appearance, but at bottom their hatred was as great as ever."

While acknowledging this possible perfidy on Montmorency's part, Diane did not keep so bitter a grudge against him. She wrote to him:

"Except for death, no other occasion shall come between you and me."

And from Saint-Germain, on February 20, 1559:

"All the same, if you will bethink you of my nature, you will find that I am your friend in every fortune in the world, which makes me entreat you, for all the recompense I ask, to love and think well of me, as much as I desire to have a share in your good grace."

In another letter dated from Villers-Cotteret, Henri and Diane take the pen by turns to send their friend their double affection blended in one.

This friendship was sealed by two marriages. The eldest son of the Constable married Diane de France, the young widow so accomplished in every good quality (1556). Montmorency having learned from his secretary du Tiers, who had it from the secretary of the Duchess, how much she adored her grandchild, the daughter of her daughter de Bouillon, proposed to her his second son d'Anville as a match for the child. It was agreed to.

It was better to be the favourite's ally than her adversary. The centre of the royal prodigalities, she directed them to those whom she liked.

"There were four that devoured the King," said Vieilleville, "as a lion devours his prey, even to seizing what he had given to his friends, to provide for their own, to wit: the Duc de Guise, Claude, who had six children whom he made very great; the Constable, with his own; the Duchesse de Valentinois, with her daughters and her sons-in-law; the Maréchal de Saint-

JEANNE DE FRANCE, DAUGHTER OF HENRY II AND DIANE DE POITIERS
École de Clouet, Bibliothèque Nationale

André, surrounded by a great number of nephews and other poor relations. There escaped them, no more than flies escape the swallows, dignities, abbeys, offices and other titbits that were incontinently gulped down. To this end they had folk posted in every part of the kingdom to advise them of everyone that was dying. Even more, they had doctors in Paris, whither all the great ones of France come, who never failed to inform them of the death of their patients, when they were of substance, and often they were made pass out for a touch of a thousand crowns."

The calumny is a trifle coarse, and smacks overmuch of Huguenot hate and the jealousy of a man who would fain have been among those who profited by the royal favours. Diane was very far from employing these methods of a second-rate criminal. She had only to wish, and Henri loaded her with gifts, with no help from the provincial doctors. Men shrink others down to their own measure. A Saint-Vallier is not a Brinvilliers, a Montmorency is no gallows bird. The King loved them, and brimmed up their cup. The Constable had wealth from elsewhere. To keep on the right side of his sometimes fantastic humour, foreign sovereigns offered him presents. Charles V and Soliman made him magnificent gifts.

"And you could see no house in Europe better stocked with rareties from the East than Chantilly."

By trying to prove too much we prove nothing. No more than any other King's mistress, no more than any other minister did the Duchess and the Constable escape the temptation to acquisitiveness. But they gave back all they received an hundredfold. Chantilly and Anet justify their greed.

CHAPTER VII

Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medicis

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Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medicis

THE Queen was the most formidable of the Grant' Sénéchalle's enemies. The dazzling splendour of the favourite checked and thwarted the dignity of the wife. It needed no common will to accept with a smile such a situation, which time seemed only to establish and consolidate. She could only be silent, and wait, patient and secret-sly. On the surface nothing scandalous ever took place, and Soranzo has said in black and white:

"Never was anything dishonourable seen."

Contarini adds:

"The King leads a perfectly regular life, if he has love affairs he keeps them so secret that nobody talks about them."

"The Queen continues to frequent the Duchess, who on her side renders her the very best services."

Here is the more disturbing evidence of Catherine herself, who writes to Henri de Béarn:

"With Madame de Valentinois everything was in all honour. But those who were so stupid as to make a scandal about it, the King would have been highly annoyed if I had kept them with me."

This is very well, but did not prevent the wife's resentment against the woman who was all-powerful with her husband. She fought in her own fashion, which was discreet and obstinate. Soranzo wrote in 1558:

"She loves the King, and puts her love for him above everything, and to such a degree, that the aim of all her thoughts seems to be nothing else but to please his Majesty, and to be with him, and without heeding fatigue she follows him as much as she can."

There we have a truer note. When the little duchessina d'Urbino, an adolescent girl, was brought to France, she knew well enough that hers was only a marriage of policy. Henri's heart was occupied. The position being established, the inferiority of her family, of which she was well aware, and which was well rubbed into her, the plainness of her face, enjoined on her to give way and not to embark upon a struggle with too strong an opponent whom time alone could bring down. Better to come to terms with her rival than to stand up against her. Nevertheless she cleverly managed to make the most of the few physical advantages she possessed. We have seen her invent a saddle that showed off her beautiful leg. Giovanni Capello said of her:

"She is a fine woman, when her face is veiled. I say this because she is tall, her figure is elegant, and her

CATHERINE DE MÉDICIS, QUEEN OF FRANCE, RIVAL OF DIANE DE POITIERS
Musée du Louvre, Les archives photographiques d' art et d'histoire

skin is fine. As for her face, it is not beautiful, the mouth is too large and the eyes big and pale. Many say she is the striking image of her uncle Leo X. She dresses richly, and with the greatest taste, but when the King goes to the camp she dons mourning, and makes all the ladies of the court do the same."

She regulates her time on her husband's day. Up at seven o'clock, she dictates her correspondence to her secretaries. At ten she hears mass, then comes a meal, a siesta, and she gives audience. The queen embroiders or reads, for books are a passion with her too. In her dowry she brought the manuscripts of the library of Lorenzo de Medici, and seized that of Marshal Strozzi. Twice a week she gives a ball.

What apparent calm in this life! The whole strength of this woman is in dissimulation. Her device is her programme.

Odiate et aspetate

"Hate and wait."

"Caress only your enemies," she said in later years.

Her rôle was to have children. She was slow to begin and then never stopped, for she had ten. She was the mother, the queen, the other was the mistress, the sovereign. But she knew how to make her dominion light. It was possible to believe in the understanding between these two women, so deeply had Diane penetrated into the intimacy of the royal household. It was

she who chose the nurses for the little princes. It was she who directed their education. Guillaume Chrétien, physician-in-ordinary to the King and the young princes, composed a book in three parts, the curious dedications of which tell us a great deal about this strange situation.

The first part, the "Livre de la génération" is dedicated to Henri II. The second, the "Livre d'Hippocrate" is offered to the Dauphin. The third "les Mois des femmes" to the "most illustrious and prudent lady, Diane de Poyctiers", saying as follows:

"Another more specific reason, Madam, induces me to address to you this fructuous book, which is the great solicitude you have always had and have, and greater from day to day, to preserve the health and good disposition of the king and queen when they are well, and to have them diligently restored when they sometimes fall in some malady, as you of late did to the said lady (the queen) who before the taking of Metz was so grievously sick at Joinville that without your diligence and kindness of spirit she was all but lost: likewise at Sedan soon after the taking of Ivry, the King being sick of a flux of dysentery, when the queen and you ceased not by night or by day to procure his healing. And you have always displayed the like love and compassion both to them and to Messeigneurs their children, for not only have you had

care of their conception and birth, but also to have them duly nursed by vigorous wet-nurses, and in like manner to have them instructed and taught by good and learned preceptors both in virtues and in the love of God."

This, actually printed and published, is sufficiently clear evidence.

Here again is a letter from the Duchess to Brissac:

"*Mons. le mareschal,* I advise you that the queen has been very ill of the purples that had come upon her, but at this hour she is much better, God be thanked, and I can assure you that the king has very well played the good husband, for he has never left her.

"D."

The understanding seemed perfect and complete. Henri, so lavish to his friend, was also to some degree generous to his wife. He gave her Montceaux-en-Brie, half-way between Meaux and La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, on the banks of the Marne. There Catherine built an Italian house, the plans of which were by Primaticcio.

But the queen was not deceived as to the nature of the attentions given to her. They were for her title, not for herself. She had no influence and no importance. It was Diane round whom the political parties revolved, between the two who were already rivals, Guise and Montmorency. Her children showed an affection for

the favourite that must have hurt her, and the little Queen of Scotland, allied through her mother with the Duchesse de Valentinois, was full of scorn for her mother-in-law. She called her

"That merchant's daughter".

Catherine looked, listened, held her tongue.

Odiate et aspetate.

"Hate and wait".

Sometimes, no doubt, her bitterness escaped her. In a letter of Galverotti to the Duke of Ferrara, on November 6, 1558, there is quoted her reply to Diane, who asked her what she was reading.

"I am reading the histories of this realm, and I find there that from time to time whores have governed the king's affairs."

That seems a trifle strong, considering the courteous relations between the two women. It is hard to know exactly how much we should keep of this gossip, of these tattle-tales, which have no more real value than those of our own day. Still by way of indication how the wind blew we must keep their evidence.

Among the most curious documents at the exhibition for the centenary of Ronsard in 1925, I have noticed one that had recently been presented by Doctor Cabanès to the Bibliothèque Nationale, and of which the *Chronique médicale* published a facsimile.

"The queen laughed heartily," says the note, "when

she saw the lines I have marked in the letter of M. de Nemours, remembering that she had wanted to employ him when Madame de Valentinois angered her so much, and to make him throw in her face a distilled aqua fortis (sulphuric acid) as though by way of a jest, whereby she should have been for the rest of her life disfigured. And in this way she thought to withdraw from her the late king her husband, which might well have been done, for she thought on it since. Burn this letter after reading it if you please."

The Medici was highly capable of harbouring this thought and of smiling on her rival all the same. She did not dare to put her plan into execution or perhaps could find no one to serve her in it. Things remained as they were.

Another aspect of Catherine's very legitimate jealousy has been left us by Brantôme. Let us take this too as a piece of gossip, suggesting not so much what actually was as what their contemporaries imagined.

"A certain king greatly loved in his day a very beautiful and honourable lady, a widow, so much that he was deemed bewitched by her, for he cared little for others, or for his wife, except at intervals, for this lady always carried off the fairest flowers of the garden. Which greatly angered the queen, for she felt herself to be as fair and as pleasing and as worthy to be served and to have as dainty morsels, so that

she was very indignant over the matter, complaining to a certain great lady, a favourite of hers, she plotted with her to devise someway by which she might spy through a peephole at the games her husband and his lady might play with one another. Thus she had several holes made in the ceiling of the said lady's bedchamber, to see the life they led there together, and they set themselves to view the spectacle. But they saw nothing that was not most goodly, for they perceived a very beautiful woman, white, dainty, and very fresh, half covered in her shift and half naked, covering her lover with all kinds of caresses and wanton frolickings, and he returning her the same. Then they would leave the bed, and lie and disport themselves together on the thick carpet by the bed, to avoid the heat of it and to enjoy the greater coolness. Then this princess having seen and perceived everything, began to weep and moan and sigh with vexation, saying that her husband never did the like with her, nor played the wanton games she had seen him do with that other. The lady who accompanied her began to console her and remonstrate with her for being so grieved, telling her that since she had been so curious to see these things she could not look for less. The princess made no other reply but 'Alas, yes! I desired to see a thing I ought not to have desired to see, since the sight of it torments me.' However having been con-

soled and taken heart she ceased to brood over it and continued as much as she could with this pastime of watching, and turned it to laughter and perhaps something besides."

This power of dissimulation possessed by Catherine is as admirable as Diane's will to domination. Both are great characters, each in her own rôle. Their pride and their adroitness are alike well-matched. Time alone could lay low one of them, impregnable both for twenty-three years in their love and in their hate.

§ §

There has been great discussion upon the famous cipher, *D H* entwined or separate, on every wall, running like the very flame of that living and perennial passion. Upon the pillars of the grain market, built on the site of the convent of the Magdalens, in 1572, thirteen years after the death of Henri, six after that of the duchess, this cipher was still to be seen. How could the queen have continued to engrave the sign that belittled her? It is indeed a disturbing circumstance. Yet if we presently discover that Diane in her will wrote that she wished to be buried in that same convent, we shall conclude that she was one of its benefactresses, and that her memory deserved to be preserved in that place, where she did not actually lie, but where she might have been laid to rest. This is

all the explanation that can be given, for there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the letters. It was an *H* and a *D*, and not a *C*, that the King wore on his doublet and that was reproduced on the liveries. Upon the walls of Anet, on those of Chenonceaux, of Limours, of Amboise, wherever the pair went, the symbol of their indestructible union was presented to their impassioned eyes. Catherine's cipher was a *K*, and at her consecration, as for her state entry into the towns, it was the *K* that stood for her. And further, if Henri II took this device—a crescent moon with these words:

Donec totum impleat orbem

it was because of the name of his lover. Catherine had it placed on her own furniture and on the tapestries of her apartments, as being the King's mark, without troubling about its origin. The two lovers displayed their love to the world without hypocrisy, and the queen, like everyone else, submitted to its inexorable law.

Around her malicious persons did not fail to play the bellows to her rancour. She lent them an attentive ear without altering her behaviour. Here is a letter of Villemadon addressed to her on August 26, 1559, quoted in the Memoirs of Condé, in 1743 (vol. I, p. 260):

"I would begin by telling you that in the reign of the late King François, being the late king, he the Dauphin coming from Piedmont where he forgot himself so far as to commit a vile and foul adultery by counsel of certain wicked favourites and unfaithful servants, by whom furthermore the wretched Grant' Sénéchalle, Diane de Poitiers, a public and common receptacle of so many men, lechers and insatiates, who are dead or still alive, was introduced to him as a jewel from which he should learn many virtues, and since the news was made known by the bastard (Diane de France) was born of the aforesaid adultery, you were brought into it by the aforesaid mockers and the old harlot who between them declared you incapable of such greatness and honour to be the wife of the dauphin of France, because you would never have children, since you were delaying so long to bear them, seeing it was not your husband's fault not to have them."

An ignorant calumny, written twenty-nine years too late to be true. Diane upheld Catherine with the king, who wanted to repudiate her for her sterility. It was to her interest to uphold her.

"Public and common receptacle of many men?" It is easily said, since not one of them can be named. To keep her ambushed enemies in awe and respect, absolutely irreproachable conduct, even more than will

and intelligence, was essential for Diane. Her fidelity was beyond attack. Among so many envious persons her lapses would have been very speedily made public. No one can find anything certain, or even possible. We have seen what is to be thought of her supposed liaison with François I. It is a manifest absurdity. She belonged to her husband, and to Henri once she was a widow. Her passion was ambition, honour, magnificence; the ordinary intrigues that busied other women left her cold. Her whole life was for the King and her family. No man approached her, and I will wager that none tempted her. Her love perhaps kept her safe, rather her own nature free from sensuality. Only one name was murmured in her day—Brissac. The accusation came from a certain Seigneur de la Tour, master of artillery, known for his irresponsible tongue. The Duchess having come to know of it, had him deprived of his post, and to show that she had no fear of the calumny, gave it to Brissac himself, who had already been made Governor of Piedmont, and Marshal of France to boot. She certainly had a particular friendship for him, and so too had Henri II. His mother had accompanied the little princes to Spain when they were sent as hostages in their father's place. The lady had known how to profit by this circumstance to push her son at court and in the good graces of the king and the favourite. A very handsome

man, intelligent and ambitious, Brissac profited by his position. Nowhere was there any question of the least misbehaviour between him and his protectress. We have numerous letters of hers addressed to him; they disclosed a watchful affection from which every idea of love is excluded.

Joinville, 1551-1552.

"*Mons. le Maréchal*, I did not wish to let your secretary, the bearer of this, depart, without accompanying him with these presents, to remember me to you always, and also to inform you that the king is about his departure, whereat we are all in grief, save that the hope we have that it will be to his profit does away with a part of our sadness. Being able to assure you, Mons. le Maréchal, that the said lord bears you such good-will that it could not be more, and entirely trusts in you for affairs there, and every time that I talk with him of you I know that he has of you such an opinion as you can wish, and has said to me that no one could persuade him anything of you that is not good and honourable for the friendship he bears you, who bids me entreat you, as much as I can urge you, to be glad and make the best cheer in your power: and I am as happy that you have recovered your health, as of anything that could happen to me, etc."

She signs herself

"Your most entirely good friend

"D."

All the letters to the Maréchal that Guiffrey publishes are of this kind. It is not possible to catch in them the slightest allusion to any sentimental feeling. Brissac owed his favour to his military talents, recognized in his own day as famous, and to the friendship his mother had known how to keep after her mission.

§ §

By skilful defence against the envious, fidelity to her friends who made a guard of honour for her, an intellectual and physical discipline that kept her in clearness of mind and in vigour of body, and an admirable understanding of her own interests, the Duchesse de Valentinois lived on so lofty a pedestal that calumnies and insults never reached her in her lifetime, indifferent as she was, like everyone in this period, to the opinion of the common herd. She was far from suspecting that a day would come when that common herd would be the master of reputations and judgments, with its inadequacy, its vulgarity and its intellectual nullity; and above all far from suspecting that if her name came down to the distant

shores of the centuries, it would be borne on the lies and vilenesses that footboys tell to one another.

The king's confidence, the king's love, the only things that mattered to her, remained wholly hers. Nicolas Pasquier, who hated her, attributes the keenness and the constancy of that feeling to an enchanted ring. An absurd argument. Had he been less blind, he would have understood. Should we perhaps see in this domination the same as that of Éléanore Galigaï over Anne of Austria,—the influence of a strong spirit upon a weak spirit?

Henri II was not weak. Little prone to the vertigoes of the senses, he inclined towards soft affection, and could recognise superiority. What better could he have found in the world than his friend! Anything that might have severed him from her would have diminished him. She was his strength, his light. Would he have done better to become isolated and unhappy, to follow the suggestions of his *entourage*? He knew how to remain firm in his feelings, as in his policy, both being bound together. The oneness of his life made his peace and his joy. His passion, evolving with age, satisfied him always. The mother friend of his boyhood was the perfect lover of his youth, the counsellor, the confidante of his beginning maturity.

She never grows old. Hardly even does a favourable *embonpoint* cover her long lines and rescue her

lovely face from wrinkles. Near her is felt appeasement and the deliverance of poise. If in the shadows the calumniators concoct that hateful legend of her, she herself weaves her legend of beauty. As she has covered the walls with the history of her mythological sister, as she has set up at the intersecting of the garden alleys statues to represent her, the two are henceforth blended and confounded with one another. In the châteaux that we go to visit, the museums, the collections, the moment we see a blonde, slender, long, divine Diana, they tell us without a moment's hesitation "a portrait of Diane de Poitiers." She has substituted for her own real image her ideal image, allusive undoubtedly, not resembling. It will be forgotten that she was a wife impeccable, a wise mother, a grandmother jealous of her title, tender and attentive, while remaining first the lover and then the friend of a King without faltering for twenty-nine years. Always blonde (which is untrue seeing that she was brown) always nude, always Olympian, she will become a courtesan whose sculptured beauty will impose its norm upon a whole age. And everyone will fling upon this idealized statue according to his pleasure what he has in his hands (for we give only what we have at our disposal) mud, or flowers. But she, remote and indifferent, will say to us, once more smiling out of the great experience of her life:

"Lo now, see how it often befalls how that to rise to the topmost degree would make it seem that the abyss is on high."

§ §

The abyss is on high? But before sinking into it, it is good to deal with the earth, to draw from it all its enjoyments, to conquer in all its contests, to seize all it has to offer. Diane is alive among the living, she is in perfect harmony with her time. To dominate her epoch she had to know all its resources.

Paris becomes transformed. Little by little it loses its severe and mediaeval look, it becomes more airy. The Saint-Honoré gate, the terraces of the Tuileries, newly acquired, the Louvre, with its portcullises and its turrets, all stand up against the sky. Upon the left bank of the Seine are seen the Pré-aux-Clercs, the University with its buildings, away down towards the Rue du Bac. Near the river is the Tour de Nesle, which shelters Cellini. Near the Louvre, the Abbaye Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois; the merchants' quarter by Saint-Eustache. Many pleasant houses are seen springing up, in the Italian fashion, with statues enniched in the walls. And always in the streets the cavalcade of elegant, arrogant seigneurs, followed by their valets; the troops of students bedizened with the colours of their

fancy; bands of monks black and white, with gleaming tonsure.

Sometimes the court condescends to take part in the municipal rejoicings. The *Recueil des Inscriptions, figures, devises et mascarades ordonnées en la ville de Paris* on Thursday, February 1, 1558, by Estienne Jodelle, Parisien (vol. 1, pp. 179-181, Marty Lavaux edition, Paris, André Weckel) gives us the following hint: "This fête was a set-back for Jodelle, who had imprudently agreed to direct it. There was seen in it a Virtue who was to have publicly crowned the Duchesse de Valentinois, with some other personages, and who was unable to carry out the part."

Boyer d'Agen, in his *Introduction aux mélodies grégoriennes*", evokes "the hour when Diane de Poitiers danced at the Court balls singing the *De Profundis* the Protestant Marot had arranged for her to the air of the *Volte Favorite*. As she raised her foot to take her place in the line of the dancers, the famous duchess struck up the Psalm *Du fond de l'abîme* and went through it handsomely to the very last verse. Cardinal Pelvé, whose age was more than ripe, danced like a madman."

How they love life in these times of extravagant enjoyments. How its least palpitations re-echo in hearts eager and avid. We are told how Mlle. de Limeuil, one of the Queen's maids of honour, when the hour of her

death was upon her, sent for her man Julien, who played the violin well.

"Julien, take your violin, and keep playing to me till you see that I am dead."

The period was steeped in music and during it the modern rules of harmony were fixed. Jannequin, Palestrina, Willaert, Orlando de Lassus, Arkadelt, delighted the ears of the court with their concerts in the new tones. Brissac maintained in his government of Piedmont the Italian musicians he gave up to Henri II. Their chief, Baldassarini, called Beaujoyeux, became a kind of superintendent of music and ballets.

A period of music and travel, over roads, along rivers, with singing boats and rafts moving to and fro. The postmaster was Brusquet, the King's fool. Manners too tended to become polite. The first books of etiquette date from the Renaissance. The *Civilitas morum puerilium* of Erasmus, printed at Basle in 1550, is the type of the species. Translated into French in 1557 by Pierre Saliat, it was revised by Mathurin Cardier under the title *Miroir de la jeunesse pour la former à bonnes moeurs et civilités de vie* in 1559.

In it we find very curious hints on the little points of behaviour fashionable in those days. Let us look at a few details of these manners demanded by good form in the time of Diane. They were hers, as well as those of the courtiers around her.

"Now and then protrude the lips to make a kind of whistle, a common habit of princes walking among the crowd."

"Throw the cloak to one side only, or let it drop behind as low as the loins."

"Swing the hip as you walk."

"Among the Italians, to do honour to anyone, they put one foot on top of the other and stand almost as though on one leg like a stork."

"It would be found agreeable to keep the eyes half closed and to pout the lips as though for a kiss."

"In saluting," we are taught, "only the right knee is bent, with a gentle sway and movement of the body. The bonnet is taken off with the right hand, and held low in the left, with the right holding the gloves at the pit of the stomach. There is the salute at meeting; if it is a man, you embrace him with the accolade, if he is of higher rank, embrace him under the arms, embracing him the lower the greater he is socially. If he is an equal you embrace him with one arm above and the other below the shoulder. For a woman you kiss her on the mouth."

Erasmus recommends that the face, the hands, and the mouth should be washed. Olivier de Serres gives advice as to the cleanliness of the skin. The teeth were cleaned with a coarse cloth, water and vinegar. Most houses had bathrooms, with a sweating-chamber.

Coquetry went to extremes. Superfluous hairs were plucked out, the nails of fingers and toes were trimmed and tended, baths scented with fragrant herbs, and the body perfumed with musk and amber knew as many elegant comforts as in our own day.

§ §

The favourite poet of the court, the master of the new tendencies, was Ronsard, whose pride was on a level with that of his protectors. Marot was a *valet de chambre*. He was a page, and soon independent and received as an equal.

"Few persons," he would say, "have the right to command me. I am very pleased to do something for the princes and the great lords, provided that in doing them humble service I am not going against the grain."

Very soon he had a place in the court, whose tone and arrogance he assimilated. His father had accompanied the Royal children to Spain. Pierre was page to the Dauphin François, with whom he went into Provence, and saw him die with much grief. He then passed into the service of Henri, and Charles d'Orléans. At the wedding of Madeleine of France and James of Scotland, at Chenonceaux, Ronsard was present. He accompanied the new queen to her far-off country and came back at her premature death. It was at Blois, in April 1546, while acting as equerry, that

the poet heard Cassandra Salviati singing and playing the lute. Attacked by deafness, he happily abandoned the courtier's trade and devoted himself to his muse. Henri II called him "sa nourriture"—his sustenance. Ronsard presented his first book of odes to the King in 1555, and celebrated the birth of his children in song. He remained faithful to the Duchesse de Valentinois, like her a champion of the French and the Catholic causes in one. Like her he served as a target for Protestant attacks, to which he made vigorous reply. Many are the verses in which he praises his master.

Il (*le ciel*) l'a premièrement quant à la forte taille,
Fait comme un de ces dieux qui vont à la bataille
Ou comme un chevalier qu' Homère nous a peints
Si vaillants devant Troie. . . .

. . . . . .

Quant à bien manier et piquer un cheval,
La France n'eut jamais ni n'aura son égal,
Il semble que ton corps naisse hors de la selle
Centaure mi cheval. . . .

. . . . . .

J'ai, quand j'étais ton page, autrefois sous Granval,
Vu dans ton écurie un semblable cheval,
Qu'on surnommait Hobère, ayant par connaissance,
De toi, car tu montais, car d'une révérence,
Courbé te saluait, puis sans le gouverner,
Se laissait de lui-même en cent voltes tourner,

Si vite et si menu, que la vue et la tête
Tournant s'ebluissaient. . . .

It was an era of intellectualism and intense feminism. In the Louvre the young Queen of Scotland was seen upholding a thesis in Latin on women's right to indulge in letters and poetry. This full blossoming expansion of thought, of joy, this march towards peace and plenty, under the sign of Diane, the goddess of the French Renaissance, was suddenly interrupted. "For the loveliest things have the worst fate."

On March 27, 1559, being Easter Monday, Henri was at Villers-Cotteret with the court. A courier came to inform him that Montmorency had made peace with Spain. The treaty was signed on April 3, in the village of Cateau, putting an end to the lamentable Italian adventures, and the era of the necessary repressions at home began, against invading heresy. This treaty was cemented by the double wedding of Marguerite de Valois, the King's sister, to Emmanuel of Savoy, and Elisabeth of France, his daughter, to Philip of Spain. Exhausted, France needed rest. Henri meant to profit by this truce to put the nation in order. Soriano summarizes the prince's thoughts for us.

"This King having, though late, discovered the danger in which heresy had brought him, was constrained, so as not to lose completely his authority and the obedience of his subjects, to make peace with Philip

on very serious conditions, and to devote all his mind to extinguishing that great fire which was burning on all sides. But he died when he was beginning to put his designs into practice."

It was the energetic resumption of complete and unified nationalism, which had for a moment been compromised by the leanings to Lutheran or Turkish alliances tried by François I. A contemporary witness wrote in November 1558:

"The whole of Paris and even the whole of France are full of Lutherans. If the King does not look to it promptly his kingdom will become worse than Germany."

Another adds:

"He is risking the loss of his throne."

Cardinal Trivulzio writes:

"The King displays a very genuine desire to cure the disorders of the realm, and almost every day he speaks of this in his council."

Lucien Romier has judged the matter excellently:

"The truth is that the religion of the men of this time did not answer to the picture with which we are familiar. Far from mystical, their beliefs had grown hardened under the weight of reasons of State, and reasons of monarchy."

"Heresy in their eyes was not reformation but rebellion."

The most brilliant hour of the reign was about to strike. Henri was about to show what was in him, and save France from the troubles that followed, when there happened the wretched accident that prevented him from it all.

The year 1559 opened propitiously for Diane. She held an envied position at court. Her prestige and influence were supreme. It was she who decided the King to sign the treaty of Cateau-Cambresis (April 2 and 3, 1559). In any event, as in the Peace of Cambrai her share and the share of her family had been handsome, so in this last treaty she took care not to forget her own interests. From her ancestors she held rights on the lands of Calabria. Hence we find in a treaty supplementary to that of Cateau the following clause: "For any lords who are to be repossessed of their property and who may have been dispossessed during the wars . . . : to Madame Diane de Poitiers, Duchesse de Valentinois, inasmuch as she claims that the marquisate of Cotron, the comté of Chatuzare and other lands in the Kingdom of Naples belong to her. His Catholic Majesty will have her given as good and swift justice by the said Naples as his own subjects, and there shall be given to her to this end favourable letters to the Viceroy and other officers in the said Naples, where need shall be."

§ §

The King was forty, Diane nearly sixty. Their attachment had crystallized into an invulnerable feeling that death alone was to break. And it was death that now attacked them.

The double marriage we spoke of was being celebrated. The fêtes went on their splendid way. At Chenonceaux the Duchess had received the betrothed pairs and the Court—her last gesture of sovereignty. At Paris a tournament was held in closed lists, in that Rue de Tournelles which had witnessed the King's first appearance in arms, when he donned once and for ever the colours of his immortal lady. This tournament began on June 28, and was to continue for eight days, interspersed with entertainments and banquets. From the opening days the King displayed incomparable mastery in arms. Everyone admired his vigour. The chief holders of the lists with him were François the Dauphin, Prince Alfonso of Ferrara, Duke Charles III of Lorraine, the Duc de Guise.

On Friday, June 30, Henri, on his horse Compère, wished to run another joust, with Montgomery the captain of his Scots Guard. The King's visor was not very well fastened. The captain's lance did not strike true, and slipped under the mask, striking the frontal bone and piercing the corner of the left eye. The King staggered, leaned against the barrier, he was held up, a flood of blood gushed out. The Queen, to whom her

astrologer Gauric had predicted this fatal accident, fainted. So did the Dauphin. The Duchesse de Valentinois turned pale and uttered a shriek. The wounded man was carried to the Tournelles. The Constable de Montmorency held one arm, the Duc de Guise the other, M. de Sancerre supported his head, the Prince de Condé and M. de Martigue took him by the legs. Behind came the Dauphin borne along in a swoon. Henri was laid on a bed. He said a prayer, and the physicians were sent for, Vesalius, and Ambrose Paré. No doubt but he would have been saved to-day by trepanning. But they did not dare the operation, which Paré called for. The wound was only dressed superficially. There were alternate changes between better and worse. An abscess formed in the head. The King desired to have music. On the 9th, feeling death drawing near, he asked for the sacrament, called the Dauphin and said to him:

"My son, you are about to be without your father, but not without my blessing. I pray God to make you more fortunate than I have been." François fainted again. At one in the afternoon on July 10, 1559, Henri II died, being forty years of age, four months and ten days, and having reigned twelve years. He left France greater territorially. He was good, brave, and strong. He was a great king and an honourable man. He knew how to be faithful to one God, to one love, to

one policy. He deserves to emerge from the shade in which history inconsiderately leaves him, to enter into a higher and better deserved glory than that of his father, an unconscionable and unfortunate play actor, or of his dangerous degenerate sons, who brought France to the brink of the abyss. Diane's star was becoming eclipsed, Catherine's was about to rise. The Duchess was forbidden the entry to the royal chamber. Shut away in her hôtel opposite the Tournelles, she lived through hours of mortal anguish. A messenger came to her from the Queen to demand from her the crown jewels the King had given her. She said:

"Is the King dead?"

"No, Madame, but it is believed that his Majesty cannot live through the night."

"Then as yet I have no master."

But as soon as she knew the end had come, she sent back the jewels of her own accord, and awaited Catherine's revenge, at the same time seeking to strengthen her position.

§ §

According to custom Henri's body was embalmed, his heart taken out and laid aside. Thereafter he was exposed on the mortuary couch. The chamber was covered with rich tapestries embroidered with gold

and silver thread. On the floor a Turkey carpet. In the great hall of state of the Tournelles, hung with violet velvet, was placed the royal effigy, made by François Clouet, clad in a shirt of Holland linen, embroidered on the collar and the sleeves. A camisole of crimson red satin, a tunic of violet satin, sprinkled with gold fleurs-de-lis, and a bonnet of brown crimson, upon which was placed the crown royal, boots of cloth of gold with crimson satin soles, a violet mantle sewn over with gold fleurs-de-lis. It was watched by the servants of the court and the monks of all the Orders, telling their prayers.

The body was taken out, and the effigy was placed on a litter, passing through the Lignery gateway. From her hôtel Diane saw for the last time the image of the man who had loved her so greatly . . .

The procession went to Notre-Dame, and thence to Saint-Denis. Two hundred persons formed it. The total sum disbursed by Sanson de Saccarlarre, the comptroller of the stables, came to 43,163 livres 19 sols tournois. The saddlers, bonnet-makers, and cloth merchants provided the mourning stuffs, 6,384 ells of black cloth.

The Scottish Guard was led by James de Montgomery, the French Guard by the Sieur de Brézay, the Swiss Guard by Henri de la Mark, and thus es-

corted there vanished from the earth the good King, the unique lover, whose reign and whose heart we cannot but think of with love.

Catherine had her chamber hung with black. From that time she adopted the black dress with long train, the veil upon her pale face, as she lives in our memory. Mary Stuart and the princesses were clad in white. Ronsard wept for his King whose gentle nature he had known, in verses that in spite of their official character, enshrine a personal emotion.

Jà, le Palais était pour la noce ordonné,
Le Louvre de lierre et de buis couronné,
Déjà sa fille au temple épouse était menée,
On n'oyait retentir que la voix d'hyménée.
Hymen, Hymen, sonnait par tous les carrefours,
Partout on ne voyait que grâces et qu'amours,
Mars banni s'enfuyait aux régions barbares,
Quand, entre les clairons, trompettes et fanfares,
Au milieu des tournois, au chef il fut blessé,
Ayant l'oeil gauche à mort, d'une flèche percé.
Spectacle pitoyable, exemple que la vie
De cent maux imprévus, fragile est poursuivie,
Puisqu'un roi si puissant d'empire et de hauteur,
En jouant est tué par un sien serviteur.
Ainsi mourut Henri, car toute chose passe
Qui de bonté, beauté, prouesse et bonne grâce
Surmontait tous les rois, mais le ciel endurci
Non plus que d'artisans, des princes n'ont souci.

THE THREE GRACES BEARING THE HEART OF HENRY II

Germain Pilon, Musée du Louvre

Les archives photographiques d'art et d'histoire

The King's heart, still fresh, was placed in a cenotaph, which is in the Louvre. Three pensive nymphs bear it, and Ronsard wrote once more:

Par une reine où sont toutes les grâces
Trois grâces sont mises dessus ce coeur,
Coeur d'un grand prince, invincible et vainqueur,
Qui fut l'honneur des vertus et des Grâces.

Toi qui les faits, de ce Henri embrasses
Ne t'ébahis, admirant sa grandeur
Qu'un peu d'espace en si peu de rondeur,
Enserre un coeur qui conquit tant de places.

Pour un grand coeur, fallait grand place aussi,
Mais l'ombre en est tant seulement ici,
Car de ce roi, l'épouse Catherine,
En lieu de marbre attique ou Parien
Prenant ce coeur le mit en sa poitrine
Et pour tombeau le garde auprès du sien.

Had he been a less adroit courtier he would have written Diane in place of Catherine, for the Queen began her life at this death, but the Duchess ended hers.

CHAPTER VIII

The Lady of Anet and Limours

1559-1566

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The Lady of Anet and Limours
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IMMEDIATELY, silence enveloped the Duchesse de Valentinois. As she had power no longer, all turned aside from her. She had everything to fear from her rival, who had at last attained her true rank, regent now, and mistress in her turn of a Kingdom that had long ignored her. All at once she was seen to stand forth formidable and inflexible, strong with the dissembling of nearly thirty years, athirst for a power that had been denied her. It was well for Diane that she had not been asleep in the days of her power. A numerous and well-placed kindred protected her retreat. With her son-in-law d'Aumale, she was covered by the Guise faction, becoming more and more formidable. Through her two sons-in-law, the husbands of Diane de France and of her granddaughter de Bouillon, she was guarded by the Montmorency clan. Her wealth was left her. One of Catherine's first acts was to claim Chenonceaux as a crown domain. This move had, it will be remembered, been guarded against by a clever manœuvre. Legally the Queen could make no claim. But the Duchess knew the arbitrary despoil-

ings of François I against Bourbon, she was well inspired not to exacerbate the Queen's envy, and she gave up Chenonceaux with a good grace in return for Chaumont. Also Catherine had horrible memories of the beautiful castle on the Loire. There in the secret shelter of its walls she had given herself up with her magicians (Nostradamus? Ruggieri?) to sinister incantations. Balzac describes them. In a room bare of all ornament, and scantily lighted by a green window, stood rows of jars containing the ingredients necessary for the great work. On the right, under the hood of the chimney, were placed the alchemical Athana, the philosophic egg, the crucibles and the alembic. There was still to be seen a fountain of purification beside the altar, with its pentacles and evocatory spells. Upon a table were the book, the inkstand, the pen, the knife, the virgin parchment destined for the supernatural pacts, before a death's head was an incense burner in which there burned the perfumes that drive away phantoms. On the left-hand wall were inscriptions in Hebrew, on the floor geometrical circles scattered here and there: the magic mirror, the astrolabe, the wand of divining and command, the hour-glass, the balance, the pentachord, the sphere. Such was this room at Chaumont, in the building between the chapel and the left wing of the château. It is told in ancient authors that Pythagoras had a steel mirror upon which

CHÂTEAU DE CHAUMONT, LOIR-ET-CHER, BELONGING TO DIANE DE POITIERS

Les archives photographiques d'art et d'histoire

he wrote formulas. He exposed it to the full moon. Then upon the mirror were shown in reflection things happening afar off, as if they were projected by the luminary. At the time of the Milanese wars between François I. and Charles V. a magician by this means used to inform the Parisians of the events that were taking place in Italy. In our times of miracles just as astonishing these things do not seem impossible. One night in 1560 while the moon clomb above Chaumont, Catherine sought to unveil the fates before giving up the château to Diane. She enquired from the science of Nostradamus, according to some, of Ruggieri, say others.

After invoking Elohim, Jehovah, Mihatron, Adonaï, wiping the mirror with a brand-new cloth, having written those names in the blood of a cock-pigeon, and invoked the Eternal while gazing on the full orb, the magician traced a circle on the floor, according to the direction of Pope Honorius, after ranging around him a human skull, a shin-bone, a lamp and a sleeping cat. Then in response to the imperious evocation Catherine suddenly saw her three sons appear in the mirror one after another, François who turned about once, Charles fourteen times, Henri fifteen times, and lastly Henri de Bourbon came and turned round once. All vanished, and thus she knew the length of her own and her son's reigns, and also the coming of the new

dynasty after the extinction of the Valois. With inflexible will power and the courage to confront the destiny she had sought to know, the Italian resolutely went into action, strong in all the methods whose efficacy she had learned in her own family, and determined to fight and conquer those whom she hated.

§ §

The first of her sons to die was François II. The little fair queen who loved him so dearly bewailed him in touching rhymes.

Si en quelque séjour,
Soit en bois ou en prée,
Soit à l'aube du jour,
Ou soit sur la vesprée,
Sans cesse mon coeur sent
Le regret d'un absent.

Remembering the old scoffing of her daughter-in-law, the sovereign Regent sent Mary Stuart back to her native mists and the vengeance of Elizabeth. She was too great a strength for the Guises. She had loved the Duchesse de Valentinois too much. With her departure, following upon the vanishing of Diane, the smile of the court disappeared. Ronsard, who had seen her born and grow up bemoaned her.

Comme un beau pré dépouillé de ses fleurs,
Comme un tableau privé de ses couleurs,

Comme le ciel s'il perdait ses étoiles,
La mer ses eaux, le navire ses voiles,
Un bois sa feuille, un antre son effroy,
Un grand palais la pompe de son roy,
Et un anneau sa perle précieuse,
Ainsi perdra la France soucieuse,
Les ornements, la royauté,
Qui fut sa fleur, sa couleur, sa beauté . . .

On August 15, 1561, the little Queen all in tears went to her tragic destiny.

"Adieu, France! adieu, France!" she said.

On the wall of the chapel at Chenonceaux there remains inscribed this phrase engraved by a Scottish soldier of her guard.

"The wrath of men accomplisheth not the justice of God."

It is its dreadful instrument, and Catherine sacrificing her daughter-in-law to her resentment proves it.

If Diane had not surrounded herself with precautions she would have suffered a terrible vengeance. But her retreat was dignified and secure, thanks to her prudence. Had the divine Leonardo taught her his formula in the days of her power?

"That thou hast acquired in thy youth stays the damage of old age, and if thou dost understand that Wisdom is the food of eld, so do that thine old age may not lack sustenance."

This Wisdom the declining duchess had heard in her childhood uttered by her great preceptress Anne of France. What had she to regret? She had known everything, possessed everything, dominated everything. If it is true that the demon that torments the end of our life is the destiny we have not known how to seize, Diane knew him not; she had drained all Glory, all Love, all riches. There were still joys left for her to taste, those that came to her from her daughters, from her grandchildren, grouped about her. She adored books, and had one of the most valuable collections. Always marvellous in health, she rode round her domains, taking pride in the work accomplished. Brantôme leaves us this description:

"I have seen Mme. la Duchesse de Valentinois at the age of seventy" [he is mistaken, for she died at sixty-six] "as lovely of face, as fresh and as amiable as when she was thirty. I saw this lady six months before she died, still so beautiful that there was no heart of stone that would not have been moved, and though once upon a time she had broken her leg on the pavement of Orleans, going and coming on horseback as skilfully and lightly as ever she had done. Her horse that time fell and slipped under her. And for all the break and the pain she endured it seemed that her beautiful face never changed. And indeed her beauty, her grace, her majesty, her lovely seeming were al-

ways the same that she had always had, and especially she was of the finest whiteness and without using any cosmetics whatever, but they do say that every morning she used some broth of potable gold. It is pity the earth covers that beautiful body."

The "potable gold" was in reality cold water and the fresh air of the woods. It was her ordered life, the Olympian calm of her thoughts. She took care, unlike the exiled Duchesse d'Étampes, never to mix with politics. She did not wish to trouble the kingdom, with which henceforward she had nothing to do. She lived in her own privacy, and for those she loved. This letter from Antoine de Bourbon shows that she continued to occupy herself with her family with the old solicitousness, and that she retained the esteem in which she was held by those who knew her.

"Madame," writes the King of Navarre, "there will never be need to use much persuasion to make me deem agreeable a thing of such good consideration as the marriage of my nephew d'Orval to Mlle Dyanne, your grand-daughter, for besides that the King and the Queen have done me the honour to write to me that they think it well, and that my brother Mons. de Nevers and my sister his wife show me no less liking for it, I foresee so much good that can come to both, with time, from this alliance, that I would rather stretch out my hand to accomplish it than to break it.

But since matters are not in that danger, and since I see them already in such terms as they can desire, I will tell you, Madame, that I am exceedingly grieved that I cannot by my presence show the pleasure and contentment I have of it, hoping that this union of two persons so near to us, to you and to me, will be cause to continue and to tighten more the good and perfect friendship that I entreat you to grant me with your good grace, to which I present my humble and most affectionate recommendations, praying God, Madame, that He have you in constant good health and long life.

"Written at Bragerac on the 10th day of January 1557.

"Your humble and most affectionate cousin to do you service.

"Antoine."

This plan, set on foot before the King's death, during Diane's time of favour, was in no way surprising. What is better still, is that it was carried out after her disgrace in 1561, which proves that her importance remained undiminished.

§ §

It is hard to follow the life of the Duchesse de Valentinois during her last years. As she was no longer with the court, the public annals remain dumb about her.

She divided her life between Anet, Chaumont, Limours. This last château had belonged to François Poncher, the keeper of the war-treasury. Under the pretext of malversations, the reason generally alleged by François I when he wanted to rid himself of a creditor or an inconvenient witness, he had him hanged at Montfaucon, and the domain was presented to the Duchesse d'Étampes, who built the château. Diane took it on the accession of Henri II, and often stayed in it, especially at the end of her life.

Diane after the King's death, retired to the Château of Anet, found consolation for the privacy and seclusion of her life in faithful friendships. She kept aloof from political affairs and concentrated her activities upon the administration of her domains.

On March 16, being in Paris, she gives these instructions in writing to Guillaumont, her secretary:

"Item he shall see whither Mademoiselle de Tournon or another will buy my estate of Florac, and if anyone wishes to have it he shall ask for it forty thousand francs in one payment". (In the Grenoble Library.)

And this again:

"To-day, the twenty-third day of the month of June, one thousand five hundred and sixty-five, we, Dyanne de Poytiers, Duchesse de Vallentinoys, and Bertrand d'Urre, seigneur de Brette, have covenanted and agreed

that for the preservation of our rights which we respectively have had upon the mountain of Brette, and to obviate the encroachment that certain persons have sought and seek to make upon the said mountain, with one common accord and consent we shall set up the necessary prosecutions."

In 1565 Diane came to Dauphiné. We find her at Étoile on September 29, at Saint-Vallier on October 12. The Chapter of Saint-Bernard took advantage of this to appeal to her justice and to submit certain claims with regard to the estate of Pizançon.

We know that she married her grand-daughter to d'Orval, the nephew of Antoine de Bourbon, and that she made her will on Twelfth Night in 1564.

"In the name of God, of the Father, the Son and the blessed Holy Spirit, and of the glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God and of all the saints of paradise, our advocates and intercessors with Him to have us forgiven for our transgressions and sins, from our birth to the end of our life, awaiting that journey which lies before all human beings. Sound in our understanding and in my body, I Diane de Poytiers, have desired to make this my testament and declaration of my last will, both to pray to God our Lord for my soul, and my children, the heirs that shall succeed me and enjoy my goods, and to set forth to them my last will, so that they can offer no excuse for them by

ignorance of what I hereinafter enjoin upon them and arrange, and if any or all of them act to the contrary and fail to carry out this my last will, I hereby cut off him or her that shall contravene against my intention, and cut them off from all my goods and give them to the Hospitals of Paris, of Chartres, of Rouen, of Lyons, of Grenoble, of Avignon, of Estoille, of Saint-Vallyer, of Ennet, because I think not to do anything prejudicial to my children with regard to the goods I leave, and because these goods coming *in part of my labours*, I can well dispose of a little portion of them as meseems good, etc."

The will is a long one. Guiffrey gives it in full. It contains the detailed assignment of her wealth to her daughters and grand-daughters, in good order and good conscience, with the lucidity that characterizes her in all things. She subsequently desires

"that masses be said at the hour when there are most people in the church". If she dies in Paris she wishes her body to be borne to the church of the *Filles repenties*. She gives minute directions for the costumes in the procession, and the number of the poor who are to follow her.

"Pray God for Diane de Poitiers" is the phrase she lays down to be said at the services she orders. The list of her estates is endless, she takes pleasure in it as in the vision of her earthly success which absorbed all her

care. Saint-Vallier, Clérieux Chantemerle, Pizançon, Chevrières, Pinet, Beaune, Transy, Étoille, Florac, Chalençon, Vallabrege, Limours, Breuille, Arcis, Rouvray, Ivry, Chaumont, Anet, her houses in Paris, etc., etc., etc. Her descendants are well provided for. To the possessions of her ancestors she added those of her own acquiring, which are no less numerous, all in good shape and of good yield. She was a far-seeing parent, an attentive head of a family, and even her natural brother, Jacques de Poitiers, owed to her the Abbey of Ivry, which she procured for him on the death of Philibert Delorme. This will is a valuable psychological document. It displays at one and the same time the practical sense and the cleverness of the woman who wrote it with meticulous care, her love of life, of riches, of the power it offers to those who know how to subdue it, pride even in death, and jealousy of her prerogatives. The name of the *Poitiers*, which died with her, had been carried to the highest point of a glory continually envied and continually enhanced through the course of centuries.

Diane de Poitiers, Grant' Sénéchalle of Normandy, Duchesse de Valentinois, died at Anet on April 25, 1566, being sixty-six years and four months old.

"Tis pity that the earth covers that beautiful body."

Pity that the night covers away that resourceful brain. A fine type of humanity had disappeared, whose

equal was not to be seen for many a long year. At any rate her sojourn here below had not been in vain, like that of all those of whom Anne of France speaks, who are merely *'ombre, nombre, et encombre'*—shadows, ciphers, and cumberers. To herself alone she owed her fortune, from herself alone she held her glory.

"The bird creates the current on which it goes forward, it flies on the vortex itself has made", said Leonardo, and Diane was that bird of soaring flight, the noble bird borne by the winds it braves.

Her blood, which had royal drops in it, was mingled with that of the greatest families of France, some of which still continue. Bouillon, Lorraine, Clermont-Tonnerre, Beauvau, Ligne, Mouy, Chaligny, Saulx-Tavannes, Saxe, etc., Spain and Savoy. Through the last named house her posterity has four times sat on the throne of France, in the person of Louis XV and his three grandsons.

§ §

Her children, who adored her and wept for her loss, built her a handsome mausoleum. The chapel in which she wished to be interred was finished in 1576. The façade was composed of four pilasters, and a Corinthian entablature, surmounting an attic tapering off into a kind of altar flanked by two women, behind which was placed an angel. On the door two fames

held in one hand a trumpet, in the other a table of the law. At the foot of one of these fames was a death's head and a serpent: at the foot of the other a sheep. In the ornamentation of the door were the emblems of Diane. The handles were iron and in the shape of crescents. The shrine was adorned with the twelve apostles in painted enamel by Pierre Limosin. The black marble sarcophagus and the kneeling statues have been attributed to Jean Goujon. This sarcophagus, upheld by four scrolls, ended in four sphinxes, with the statue of the Duchess above. No trace of this tomb remains at Anet. It was removed in 1792 and taken as a work of art to the Museum of the Petits-Augustins, set up by the architect Lenoir (by decree of the Convention). At the dispersal of this museum, the mausoleum was deposited at Versailles in the cellars of the palace; to-day it is in a hall not open to the public.

In fulfilment of her last wishes, and eight months after the death of the Grant' Sénéchalle, on December 20, 1566, there took place in the Church of Saint-Vallier the "Chante général et solennel de Madame Dame" before a numerous congregation. The account of this ceremony is preserved in the archives of the department of la Drôme. Among the guests of the seigneurs and the Dame d'Aumale, the daughter of the defunct lady, are cited MM. de Montrésor, de Clapey-

TOMB OF DIANE AT ANET
At Present at Versailles. Designed by Gaignière

MEDAL STRUCK WITH THE EFFIGY OF DIANE DE POITIERS

ron, de Châteauneuf, de la Sablière, de la Lande, du Monchet, de Narratin, de Chabrillan, de Beausemblant, etc. The funeral oration was pronounced by the superior of the Jesuits of Tournon, the church was hung with black and the *chapelle ardente* ablaze with wax tapers. One hundred poor persons clad in white, with white candles and paternosters in their hands, recited prayers during the mass.

We have gone on pilgrimage among those homes of hers that survive or have disappeared, Rouen, Anet, Limours, Saint-Vallier, Chenonceaux, Chaumont, to ponder over that extraordinary existence. The verses of Denne Baron sang in our memory.

> Plus de tumulte, plus de voix,
> On entend le temps seul, d'une aile monotone,
> Balayer la cendre des rois.

Those ashes of hers never cease to be blown about the world; they are still smoking with that great unquenchable fire they keep at their heart. What legends have been grafted upon the memory of this great lady. We may hate her, we may love her, but at least let it be for sound and real reasons, not because of piled-up calumnies. Often they are based on the vaguest of hints, on absurd hearsay tales. We must discard the Protestant pamphlets, mere tissues of falsehoods, and written long after the facts they distort out of all likeness. We must arm ourselves with all our

logic, all our impartiality, to deal with the documents offered to our consideration. Let us examine and sift dates, characters, possibilities. M. Firmin-Didot was obliged to make honourable amends to the memory of her whom, on the strength of false documents, he had unjustly attacked. MM. Louis Paris, Chabouillet, and others, take their stand as determined champions of Diane, after long study of her in every aspect. When her tomb was opened, on June 18, 1793 (or on June 15) they found with the duchess two bodies of children, and here is how the fact was reported:

"Two old men, witnesses of the exhumation, relate that with Diane there were lying two little girls clad like *their mother*, one of five or six years of age, the other seven or eight, *these children are those she had had from her intercourse with Henri II.*"

It is sufficient merely to consider her age to do away with this absurd tale. Here is the very simple truth. A manuscript of the house of Guise, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, informs us that the Duchesse d'Aumale, daughter of Diane and of Louis de Brézé, had three children, born and baptized at Anet: Catherine-Marie-Romula, born on October 7, 1549, subsequently married to the Duc de Mercoeur; Antoine, Comte de Saint-Vallier, born on Sunday, November 1, 1562; and Charles, born on December 23, 1566, who died on May 7, 1568.

"The said Charles Monsieur, died in Paris, on the 7th day of May 1568, between five and six in the morning, and his body was conveyed to Anet and buried there, and placed in sepulture with the late Mme. Diane de Poitiers, Duchesse de Valentinois, his grandmother, deceased at the Château d'Annet on April 2, 1566." This little girl was a little boy, and so much for one lie. The other cannot but be just as flagrant.

§ §

Henri II had three natural children.

Henri, Grand Prior of France, governor of Provence, admiral of the Eastern seas, died in 1586, whose mother was the Scotswoman Miss Fleming; Diane de France, born in 1538 or 1539, the daughter of Diane de Poitiers or (according to opinion) of Filippa Duca, a Piedmontese lady. She married as her second husband a Montmorency and remained at court. The favourite sister of Henri III, it was she who brought back Catherine, with whom she was in high favour, when she died at Saint-Denis. She died at the age of eighty in 1619. And there was Henri de Saint-Remy, whose mother was Nicole de Savigni.

The end of the Constable's lawsuit also deserves to be known, since it was to Diane's action that the great unfortunate partly owed his rehabilitation. Jacqueline

de Longwy had in August 1538 married Louis de Bourbon, Duc de Montpensier. Through her mother Jeanne d'Orleans, a natural sister of François I, she belonged to the royal family. A great friend of Catherine's, it was to her influence that the house of Montpensier owed its recovery, after the death of Henri II, of a part of the possessions of the Constable de Bourbon.

§ §

In the *Echo de Paris* of July 21, 1924, it was related that before the tribunal of Mons, Antoine de Medicis, domiciled in Belgium, laid claim to his authentic patent of nobility as descendant of Philippe de Médicis, *a natural son of Catherine*, born at the castle of Guardasone in Italy, in 1560, that is to say a year after the death of Henri II. He won his case. It is a curious piece of information and deserves to be noted. Time has its tides like the sea, and throws up the flotsam of the past, most strange witnesses to causes in dispute.

"Mamma, is *Yesterday* not over?" said the Dauphin to Marie Antoinette, after the terrible day of June 20, 1792.

Yesterday is never over. Yesterday endures eternally. Days follow one another, and causes trail after them their unforeseen effects. Diane is ever living in the homes her magnificence created. Her case has not yet

been judged. And definitely and clearly I take her side. It is open to anyone to prefer before her souls wearing the meek halo of renunciation and humility—to each his own formula of life. Did she realize her destiny? Did she "go forward upon the vortex herself had made?" Did she realize in perfection the life for which nature had made her? Did she preserve the harmony of her days, the curve of which she had traced out beforehand? Was she victorious over everyone? and must she not be victorious once more over posterity that misjudges her? Being what she was, living in her own day, in her own environment, possessing the elements that she had at her command, she could not but be beautiful, radiant, magnificent, the quickening breath of an age, the creator of a style. Victim of the envious ones who were as grasping as she, but knew not how to satisfy their graspingness; as ambitious as she, but knew not how to carry their ambition to the heights, who can wonder why? We are hated merely because we exist, because we breathe, and the place we occupy is always too spacious to please others. Diane had the great art of princes, which is to take and to give. She knew well how to serve herself, she knew better still how to serve life. Let all the beauty she created plead in her favour.

"Madame," said Mme. de Maintenon to the Prin-

cesse des Ursins, "Madame, it seems to me that everyone suffers through his personality."

The personality of the Duchesse de Valentinois being great she was bound to undergo all the risks it entailed, of which the least was the hatred of the low and the vile.

She was kind to her father, whom she saved from the scaffold, kind to her old husband to whom she knew how to remain faithful, kind to her daughters whom she made rich and for whom she found great marriages. She loved *once*, a great King whom she made happy, and who adored and respected her. She is no courtesan, she is a *Great Lady* of the bygone years, to whom the present times are indebted for a great example of energy, a great heritage of Beauty, which exalts France, of which she is one of the most certain Glories.

THE END

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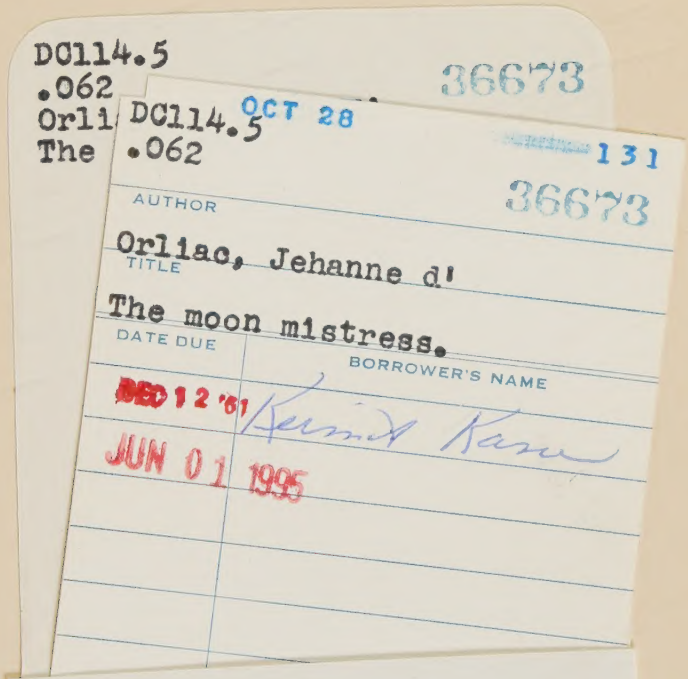
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